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HOT SHOTS TIPS

1 PuttCrusher04 on the Short Game

There are two places I like to blow off steam. One is the wrestling ring, where I see how high I can throw other wrestlers. The other is the putting green. A good putt depends on a proper grip. I grip the putter firmly, but just loose enough so I don't shatter it with my bare hands.

419, 420...



When it comes to putting, mental preparation is key. For me, bench-pressing a golf cart and a couple hundred push-ups usually do the trick.



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2

BunkerBreaker007 on Getting Out of the Sand

People always ask how I learned to conquer these mighty sand traps. I don't know. That's like asking how gale-force winds learn to blow just as a dude's ready to tee off. All I do know is that ever since I was a kid, I liked surfing near sand, sitting on sand, even eating sand. But that was on a dare.



Before attempting to get that ball out, thoroughly wax your wedge. Better too much than not enough.



Swing under the ball and lift it out of the sand. Then do a thorough toe check for any signs of sand jam.



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THIS IS TOTAL WAR.



A 21ST CENTURY LOOK AT ANCIENT BATTLES
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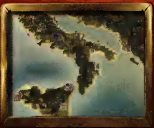
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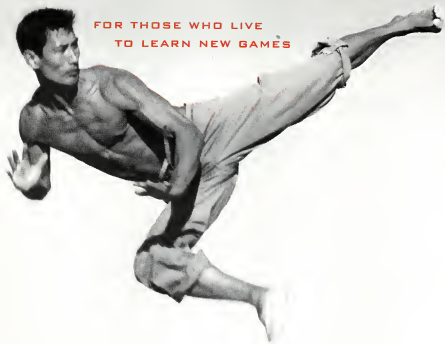


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WHAT UP WITH 1UP?

Can't get enough *GMR*? Can't wait for your next issue? Check out 1UP.com for your daily fix of gaming goodness.

THIS MONTH ON GMR.1UP.COM

PETER MOLYNEUX! Christian's interview with this gaming god was so long, we didn't have room to run the whole thing. But not to worry. Head to our home page at <http://GMR.1UP.com> to read every word.

BLOG MADNESS

Want to know more about the *GMR* staff? Read their 1UP.com blogs!



GMR_CAROLINEKING.1UP.COM

Is Caroline full of sugar and spice and everything nice, or spit and vitriol? Learn the truth

by reading her blog!

CLUBBING

CLUBS.1UP.COM



Carrie hosts an America's Next Top Model discussion club at <http://TopModel-club.1UP.com>. It's true; you can start a club about anything you want. Just click <http://clubs.1UP.com> and set it up. You get your own URL, a club journal, and a place to post images.

If you're not interested in aspiring models, there are myriad other clubs—even videogame-related ones.

ALL A BOARD

Visit <http://boards.1UP.com> and you can join in by posting your deep thoughts at *GMR*'s "Nuclear War on the Dance Floor" official board. Love us or hate us, you can discuss your views with other folks, including *GMR* editors. Or just read whatever everyone else is talking about—it's OK to lurk.

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"... Team Ninja stand ready to take the fighting game franchise into uncharted waters yet again." IGN

"Both Hardcore and DOA2 are built from the ground up to make your Xbox pulse with power." Official Xbox Magazine
"most exciting fighting game of the year." ESR

ALIVE A T E



Heaven on earth is here with the first 3D online fighting game to date, Dead or Alive Ultimate. Experience the first "Virtual Arcade" with a double disk pack featuring the original DDA and a totally redesigned DOA2, creating a whole new world in online fighting games. DDA2, built from the ground up on a brand new engine, features new interactive worlds, never-before seen costumes, mind-blowing graphics, earth-shattering new moves, and exclusive new cut scenes that reveal secrets from the past. Plus, special bonus content contains a behind the scenes peek at the making of DOAU and the developers behind the series, the DOA3 Booster Disc, collectable trading cards and more!

DEAD OR ALIVE ULTIMATE

Get the most out of 1UP.com!

It's where gamers who live to play get what they need to succeed: The best news, reviews, previews, screen shots and cheats. Plus, on 1UP you can build your own community of gamers to share tips, tactics and even success stories.

>THE BEST GAME COVERAGE

The screenshot shows the 1UP.com homepage with a focus on Halo 2. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links like 'HOME', 'PLATFORMS', 'HIGHLIGHTS', 'REVIEWS', 'SCREENSHOTS', 'GAMES', 'CHEATS', and 'SHOTS'. Below this, a 'WELCOME TO 1UP' message is followed by a 'Show off your game collection on a 1UP page' link. The main content area features a large article for Halo 2, titled 'Halo 2: Light & Dark: You played the Xbox's biggest game ever, and he'd like to tell you all about it'. The article is by Ben Kruze and dated 07/15/2004. It includes a 'Halo, nice to meet you' section and a 'User Hype' section. The 'User Hype' section shows a list of user comments and ratings for the article. On the right side of the page, there's a 'SEARCH' bar and a 'Show off your game collection on a 1UP page' link. Below the search bar, there's a 'People who own this game' section with a list of users and their game collections. The bottom of the page features a '1UP Partners' section with logos for WCG, World Cyber Games, and JULY.

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I like being asked how I make my living. Yes, I do play games all the time (*Burnout 3* currently). Yes, I do have the coolest job in the world. No, I don't know [exactly] when *GTA: San Andreas* or *Halo 2* are shipping. And, yeah, Milky's cool.

Then come the phase-two questions: What score did you give [game name]? What about [game name]? It's probably be a good idea for me to carry around a list of all of GMR's review scores. There are hundreds by now, and my poor short-tempered mind can't remember them all. It's obvious from this line of questioning how important reviews are to you. Which is why reviews are important to us. We take them dead seriously—after all, expert, balanced reviews are tools that help you make the most informed game-buying decisions. If we can help steer just one person to the right game for them, then we're doing our job.

This month features a double hit of X—box that is. Find out what we think of *DOA Ultimate* and *Fable* in our exclusive reviews. Then, if the mood sways you, send a note to GMR@iup.com, and let us know what YOU think. ☛ **Teddy Byron, Bloody Bear of Sweet Revenge**



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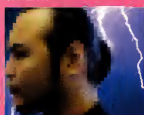
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Codes and strategies produced in association with Prima Games.



SUPER STAFF FIGHTER IV PUNCH-OUT PLUS DELTA EDITION

THREAT



It's not every day you see a high-flying wireworks battle between a hand-to-hand robot specialist (using Hopi Indian techniques) like **Threat** and a firearms expert like the eddy-eyed, pig-tailed lady fighter **Clint Eastwood**. Players who select **Threat** usually exploit his cheap luffan-mashing sweep-kicks, but those in the know can easily counter him by using **Eastwood's** famous *Deadline* move.

versus

CLINT EASTWOOD



TENDER-MAN



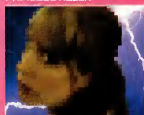
The epic *doraybrook* between **Tender-Man** (specialty: He kills you with sexy, tender love) and **The Sweet** (you'll know why they call him **The Sweet** in about 18 words) ended abruptly when—despite the **Tender-Man's** seemingly inevitable victory—**The Sweet** unleashed his nearly-impossible-to-execute *Nuttercracker*, turning a lopsided battle into a whirlwind upset that sent the *Nosaga* tumbling.

versus

THE SWEET



PRINCESS HELLA



In similar fight no matter how either character is played, **Princess Hella** is able to swiftly negate the overmatched **Evil Boll Weevil's** Tier-3 ranged *Hissy* *Tantrum* attack by doing a back-to-back-to-quarter-circle-to-forward motion, ending with a *Strong Dis*. This buffers her *Playa Hata* party, stunning the **Weevil** long enough for **Hella** to shatter his pork-rind armor with a quick shot to the grundle.

versus

EVIL BOLL WEEVIL



BLOODY BEAR OF SWEET REVENGE



Tutorial **Tip** **Level** **Super** **Staff** **Fighter IV** **Punch-Out Plus** **Delta** **Editor** players know that once you've navigated your way past the curly charms of **Princess Hella**, the low-blow meek attacks of **The Sweet**, and the gassy, bloated contrails of **Evil Boll Weevil**, your last stop before the closing credits is the game-ending battle with...
FIYPOPOPE's final boss. Like many fighting-game bosses, the **Bloody Bear** of



Sweet Revenge takes up half the screen and uses a cheap, unblockable attack called *Monday Morning Meetings*. Designed to confuse the player with feelings of camaraderie and fellowship, the **BBOGR** then blindsides you with a finishing move known as *Work*. It is this unstoppable combo that has prevented any player from actually finishing a game of **FIYPOPOPE**. What will the long-awaited sequel, *Staff Fighter Prime*, bring?

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I

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POST



→ Last month in *GMR: Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* coverboy Carl Johnson exploits in the great state of San Andreas were revealed. He's a little bit country, and a little bit rock and roll. But he's mostly gangsta rap.

MORE ENLIGHTENMENT FOR OUR READERS? THE MAGIC 8-BALL SAYS. "EH. MAYBE"

MILITARY MADNESS

I took out an attachment from your magazine and did a double take. Apparently, the Navy can use your magazine as a recruitment poster. Amazing. Taking young, impressionable teens, who probably love playing *Splinter Cell* and *Rainbow Six*, and making them think, "Hey, that would be cool!" instead of looking at the fact that there are very few heroes in war and too many dead boys that don't come home to a ticker tape parade. I'm disgusted. Your magazine should be about games and game-related news. The military, no matter what branch, is NOT a game. It's life and death. I hope the money they paid you for the ad space wasn't covered in blood.

_JB

A few key points to address: 1) Anyone who joins the military ought to understand that a military exists to fight, and unfortunately, that sometimes means people will die. This is common sense. 2) Without a healthy recruiting program, enlistment would drop, which means that hey, it's time for a draft. So



→ A very, uh, *uh* much more worthwhile topic than a simple recruitment post! A recruitment

instead of volunteers fighting, it's possible you'd be out there, too. 3) To say that "there are very few heroes in war" disgraces the memory of countless soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines who died fighting for just causes, and the millions of those who put themselves at risk every day for our benefit. Don't get us wrong, we'd like nothing more than to live in a world where there is no war and people of all nations love each other. We'd also like to own a magical tree that grows money, have a car that flies through the sky, and see music videos on MTV. Reality bites, eh?

SHARING ISN'T CARING

After reading Evan Shamon's column about exclusivity in *GMR #20*, I began thinking about our current console generation. Because of the exclusivity of *Grand Theft Auto* on the PS2 until recently, Sony has had a claim to fame. Likewise, die-hard *Oddworld* fans could not play *Munch's Oddysee* without owning a system made by Nintendo or Microsoft. The *Resident Evil* series has been a great asset to Nintendo, while *Ratchet*, *Jak*, and *Sly* make the PS2 the

platformer's system of choice. The personality which identifies our current systems to consumers would not be there without exclusivity. The giving up of exclusivity in the events of *Oddworld Stranger* and the *Grand Theft Auto* double pack makes for interesting turns in the console wars. Without exclusivity, *Halo* would not have made gamers look twice at the Xbox. Without exclusivity, we have abominations such as *Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles*. Games such as *Enter the Matrix* could have been polished to near perfection if the effort had not been so spread out. Clearly, exclusivity is a staple of our industry, one that does indeed hold us back from, as Evan Shamon said, "its true potential." For those who would like to see exclusivity done away with, I have something to say. Remember Atari. Remember 1983-84. The videogame industry crashed. Hard. Because Atari had no real competition and was free to flood the market with anything in a cartridge. Remember the immortal words of one Atari executive in late 1982, "I can put horseshit in a cartridge and sell a million of them." Now there may be many opinions on this matter of exclusivity, but I don't think that any **I→**

MESSAGE BOARD JUNKIES

How did that line in *American Beauty* go? "There are so many ways to communicate on IUP.com, sometimes we just can't stand it." Well, it was something like that. This month, the *GMR* board was abuzz with GTA discussion:

Who likes the *Grand Theft Auto* series? I personally don't mind it. It could be worse, but it could be a lot better. What are your thoughts on *San Andreas*?
_chosebuster

Personally, I'm not into it too much. I'm not saying that they suck or anything, but it's really not my cup of tea. After a while of just "go anywhere, do anything," I ran out of things to

do. I mean, how many old ladies do I have to run over here to have a good time?
_XenoBach

I love the series due to the freedom you have in the games.
_LagjSunshine

I don't actually own it, but I've played it at my friend's house (not by choice, but because he

loves the game) and just never found it so overly awesome that I just had to have it for myself. It might be because I never got too deep into the story or the missions... Maybe if I got into it more, I'd get more enjoyment out of it.
_dustinmiles

My opinion? I never really did like these games because they got boring for me after 30 minutes, but this game coming out looks pretty



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gamer wants one console to lead for a few years, as all the while developers get lazy and produce worse and worse games, until everyone finally gets fed up, stops buying them, and forces the system's company to bury millions more games in the New Mexico desert.

_Laguna Loire



WAY OF THE GUN

I think you should advertise more than just star games. You only advertise games like *Ominusha* and *Resident Evil*. There should be games besides war games advertised. It can get boring only reading about games with guns.

_Jasmine Harvey

We were going to advertise the next game starring the Olsen twin, but we hear rumors that they're going to give Mary-Kate a Glock. Which is just about the greatest idea ever.

KNOCK YOU OUT

When I went to the Seaside Heights, NJ, boardwalk while visiting my mother, I saw something that made my jaw drop. It was a

cock. You can do more the ygs, and it's bigger—not just one city.
_Human annoyance

I really don't like the *GTA* series, because I've always thought that it isn't too creative. In my opinion, it doesn't take too much creativity to place a character in a city based on a real-life city so it can do whatever you tell it to do.
_gaming otaku

Punch-Out!! arcade machine. The thing that shocked me is that it had two screens, just like the Nintendo DS. Whenever someone mentions anything like the DS in the past, they go to certain Game & Watch handheld games. It is odd nobody mentioned this arcade machine.

_Jared Thorbahn

You hear that, Nintendo? Let us say it a little louder: **PUNCH-OUT!!! FOR THE DS, PLEASE.**

A STAR IS BORN!

OK, so, like, I walk into my local EB and I'm drooling over the *Doom 3* strategy guide, when all of a sudden I see an odd-looking fellow staring back at me on the TV monitor in the store. Holy jeez, it was *Andrew Plister* on EB TV!!!! I laughed and then promptly became startled. I thought, "Hey, maybe if Plister started small, maybe did some Broadway or a few late-night appearances, then worked his way to the top, maybe one day we would see Plister and Stallone in *Ricky 6: Ricky vs. The Fist of Fury*." I dunno about you guys, but it sounds like a recipe for magic, or a straight to DVD release.

_Phil DeBough

Lovers of the legitimate theater rejoice, for beginning this December, *Sir David Alan Grier* in the off-on-off-Broadway smash *I'm Sorry, You Found That Where?*, a hilarious send-up of the commercial whaling industry featuring wacky high jinx... wait a minute. You were drooling over a strategy guide? **1E**

DOOPSI

In our September issue, the illustrations in our *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* feature were incorrectly attributed to *Rey Serrano*. *Rey* made the background art, while the character art was done by *Rockstar's* stable of artists.

The free-roaming game is already played out, so no longer come about *GTA* or certainly *DRIVER*.
_nightbird

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Homework is necessary for all of us, twenty-fold for you.
_TowelMan 1E

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Online play not available on all platforms. See back of product packs for details. INTERNET CONNECTION required for online play PlayStation 2 online play requires Internet Connection, Network Adaptor (for PlayStation 2) and Memory Card (RAM) (for PlayStation 2) (each sold separately). Check platform box for online play.

[illegible]

FRONT



GMR NEWS NETWORK

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Burnout 3



Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3

→ Criterion's RenderWare technology is behind some of the biggest games of all time.



Grand Theft Auto: Vice City



Winning Eleven 8

EA OWNS RENDERWARE

POWERHOUSE GRABS CRITERION AND A HEFTY PIECE OF THE INDUSTRY
U.K.

Plenty of publishers have bought a developer to get hold of a key game franchise: Activision bought Nevsoft for Tony Hawk's Pro Skater, THQ bought Relic for its Warhammer 40,000 project, and Rockstar bought DMA Design to lock up Grand Theft Auto. The acquisition of the Criterion Software Group by Electronic Arts is arguably a much bigger deal, though. The \$48 million it spent on the buyout gives EA a stake in many of the industry's most successful titles.

Criterion doesn't just make its own games. Its biggest asset is the

RenderWare middleware platform, a set of tools for everything from graphics to physics to managing workflow, which has powered the development of numerous titles, including Grand Theft Auto and NBA Ballers. With Criterion in its pocket, EA will get a cut of the profits from some of its closest competition.

How successful is RenderWare? Criterion claims that more than 500 games using its technology have been developed or are in development right now, including one of every four console titles currently in the works. The three biggest franchises to use

RenderWare this generation—Rockstar's Grand Theft Auto, Activision's Tony Hawk's Pro Skater, and Konami's Winning Eleven—have sold more than 20 million units worldwide between them. Lionhead Studios uses Criterion's physics solution in all of its games, and Criterion technology is at the core of Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas.

EA, hardly of a mind to mess with a successful business model, will continue to license RenderWare to third-party developers. However, it also plans to blend Criterion's technology with its own development tools, creating a framework

that presumably provides its internal teams with the best of both worlds.

The acquisition also gives EA a handle on what might be a killer title on the horizon. Though only a few insiders saw the early technology demos, Criterion's first-person shooter Black was one of the most talked-about games to come out of E3 2003. Expected to make a splashier debut sometime next year, Black is said to be a technological powerhouse. If it can do for shooters what Burnout 3 did for racers, EA will have made a wise investment indeed. **E+**

MORE FFXII

NEW SHOTS. NEW PLOTS

JAPAN

→ This latest batch of *Final Fantasy XII* screenshots showcases a character revealed to be just as important to the story as protagonists Vaan and Ashe—the enigmatic General Basch. He's introduced right as he assassinates the king on his throne in the very beginning of the game, before Vaan even shows up.

It's clear that *FFXII*, much like Yasumi Matsuno's previous games, *Final Fantasy Tactics* and *Vagrant Story*, will be twisted up with baroque politics and a huge cast of

characters. It's also obvious to anyone who's played an RPG before that Basch's motivations will be revealed to be much more complicated than they seem at first.

In the latest shots, we also learn that you can play as Penelo, Vaan's girlfriend. Penelo is shown consulting with a moogles whilst a chocobo kicks it in the background. Whether she's a part of the larger adventure, we don't quite know yet, but we trust Matsuno to keep things confusing. And hey, Basch adds some much-needed testosterone to the adventure. **16**



→ Penelo bargains with a moogles, perhaps to gain a ride on a chocobo. Or maybe she's looking for relationship counseling. Between Vaan's ultra-lay looks and his disinterest in listening to her, she probably needs it. Penelo's full role in the story of *FFXII* isn't yet known, but we'd bet our money Vaan dishes her for Ashe.

GAMEPORT VITAL GAME INFO. NOW BOARDING.

ARRIVALS COMING SOON

SYSTEM	ETA	TITLE	HOW HOT?
GBA	SEPT	POKÉMON LEAFGREEN & FIRERED We thought fire was more orange, but that's just us.	★★★★
GC/PS2/XB	SEPT	DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NY At least it's a city worth fighting for.	★★★★
PS2	SEPT	GRADIUS V Proves that change is good. Very good.	★★★
XB	OCT	OUTRUN 2 Can Outrun 2 outrun Burnout 3?	★★★★★
XB	OCT	ULTRA BUST-A-MOVE X How about Ultra-Mega-Ultra Bust-A-Move X-Treme?	★★
PC	OCT	CLOSE COMBAT: FIRST TO FIGHT It may be the first to fight, but it won't be the last.	★★
PS2/XB	OCT	MORTAL KOMBAT: DECEPTION Don't be deceived: Mortal Kombat is back.	★★★★
GBA/GC/PC/PS2/XB	OCT	TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2 How far underground can he go?	★★★
PC/PS2/XB	OCT	LEISURE SUIT LARRY: MAGNA CUM LAUDE We're pretty certain his degree isn't in feminist studies.	★★
PS2	OCT	TAIKO DRUM MASTER Smack a smiling drum in the face.	★★★★
PS2	OCT	GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS Soon to be stealing sales from every other game.	★★★★
PS2	OCT	DEATH BY DEGREES Nina gets her own game. Where's Alex and Roger's?	★★★★
GBA	DCT	BDKTAI 2: SDLAR BOY DJANGO Pray for a sunny autumn.	★★★★
PS2	NOV	RATCHET & CLANK: UP YOUR ARSENAL Ratchet up the multiplayer and clank some heads.	★★★★
XB	NOV	BLINX 2: MASTERS OF TIME & SPACE Can Arwen?	★★★★
PS2/XB	NOV	CAPCOM FIGHTING EVOLUTION Nothing says "evolution" like 10-year-old characters.	★★★★

DEPARTURES OUT NOW

SYSTEM	TITLE	GMR SCORE
GC/PS2/XB	SPIDER-MAN 2 Spin a web, any size. Catches gamers just like flies.	8 ^{HD}
PS2/XB	ESPN NFL 2K5 A worthless bargain.	8 ^{HD}
PS2/XB	SHOWDOWN: LEGENDS OF WRESTLING Three strikes and you're out? Hope that applies to wrestling, too.	3 ^{HD}
GBA	ASTRO BOY: THE OMEGA FACTOR If you can get past the outfit, Astro Boy is just rad.	8 ^{HD}
PS2/XB	DRIV3R Time to drive back to the store for a trade-in.	5 ^{HD}
PC	LINEAGE II: THE CHAOTIC CHRONICLE Monotony times infinity.	5 ^{HD}
GC/PS2/XB	MAOEN NFL 2005 The king of football games keeps the crown.	9 ^{HD}
PS2	STAR OCEAN: TILL THE END OF TIME His influence may not last that long, though.	7 ^{HD}
PS2	GHOSTHUNTER Spectral, but not spectacular.	7 ^{HD}
PS2	CRIMSON TEARS Don't cry for me, Japan.	8 ^{HD}
GBA	HAMTARO: HAM-HAM GAMES Summer Olympics + hamsters = fun.	7 ^{HD}
PS2	ATHENS 2004 Blood, nose, hamsters, maybe.	5 ^{HD}
PS2	TOOO MCFARLANE'S EVIL PROPHECY Also Todd McFarlane's increasing irrelevance.	2 ^{HD}
GC	AMAZING ISLAND Well, it takes place on an island, anyway.	6 ^{HD}
GC	PUYO POP FEVER We've got the fever for the flavor of some puyos!	5 ^{HD}
XB	RAINBOW SIX 3: BLACK ARROW Stay tuned for Rainbow Six 4, Nonsense Title 27.	7 ^{HD}

NINTENDO
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MARK MACDONALD

DS, OH YES

➔ The big news this month in the land of N is the revamped look and features of Nintendo's upcoming DS dual-screen handheld. How does it fare? Let's take a look:

Sleek new design: An improvement in just about every way—we'll done Nintendo. The sleek new high-tech look says, "You know you want me," where the clunky old design was more like, "Touch me...please?" Anybody? Hello? Someone must have read my column last month!

Bigger buttons: Again, Nintendo listened to feedback. I only wish it would have heeded all the people calling for an analog stick.

Stereo speakers: Frankly, it's embarrassing that this wasn't in the first DS design.

Sticking with the name Nintendo DS: Boo! With the GBA SP and PSP out there, I was hoping for something more distinctive to match the DS' bizarre concept and give it a little personality. Plus, DS lends itself a bit too easily to catchy negative headlines from clever pundits like myself: DSappointment, DSgusting, DSatisfied.

Price and release date: Nintendo still isn't saying, but I'm going to make a prediction based on the scientific method of staring at the new DS design for five minutes: sometime close to Thanksgiving at \$139.99. ☹

...Mark MacDonald is executive editor at *Electronic Gaming Monthly*.

[TALENT]
* EUGENE JARVIS
QUARTERS AGAINST OSAMA?

➔ Eugene Jarvis has been a force in the arcade industry for the past 20-plus years. Best known in the '80s for the twin geniuses of *Robotron* and *Defender*, he later moved on to the popular '90s Crusin' race series before starting a new company, Raw Thrills, which hopes to reinvigorate the arcade with *Target: Terror*, out now.

GMR: Why did you think now was the time to fire back with a new arcade title?

EJ: I have kind of a personal attachment to it. I enjoy the immediacy, and [so does] the 8-year-old kid inside of me. Somebody's got to do it, and I guess that's me.

GMR: You made some classic arcade games: *Robotron* and *Defender*. What do you think made them classics?

EJ: I guess those two games in particular had extremely intense, demanding gameplay. Obviously, your survival was at stake. Sometimes you had to deal with hundreds of enemies simultaneously. And you had other goals, such as saving the human race, trying to prevent your planet from being destroyed, or going for some kind of bonus—so we had this kind of conflicting goal structure which drove players insane, and for the time, the effects and the sound were phenomenal. It was in the right place at the right time, kind of like being in Liverpool in 1964.

GMR: Why has the arcade market has shrunk so much in the United States?

EJ: It's kind of like the war was won and videogames conquered the world. Starting in the arcade, they just went everywhere. Now there are videogames on your cell phone, videogames on your TV, videogames on every website... People are just deluged with them, and I think there has to be a reason to play an arcade game other than "It's another videogame." There has to be some special hook there.

GMR: What about *Target: Terror* should appeal to nongamers?

EJ: Anyone can just walk up to it, grab a

gun, and start shooting terrorists. You've got to catch the player's eyes and put them in a situation they care about. In *Target: Terror*'s ultimate mission, you're in a hijacked airliner that's heading for the White House, and you'd better do something.

GMR: Do you think politics have a place in games?

EJ: I think like any art form, inevitably there is some political undercurrent. Everybody is coming from some direction, whether it's a *RoboCop* kind of thing or a whale-hugging perspective. It's always there. And I think that as any art form matures, you're going to see this kind of thing.

GMR: What are some of your favorite games from the past and present?

EJ: *Space Invaders* and *Asteroids* were the two games that really hooked me. I guess I've always been a fan of the gun games, starting with the *Terminator 2* game from Midway, the classic *Virtua Cop* games, and *Time Crisis*. I think Sega's *Daytona USA* is, in my mind, the all-time greatest driving game.

GMR: What about following up your own classic games?

EJ: People are always going, "You have to do a new *Defender!* Or *Robotron!*" But to try to get the intensity of that kind of full-blown 2D, God's-eye gameplay—to get the hot coolness of the 3D graphics combined with that old gameplay—it's been a very tough recipe to handle. ☹



PLAYSTATION
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JOHN DAVISON

LAUGHLESS

➔ Why aren't games funny? You'd think after all these years of the game industry declaring itself the new frontier of entertainment that we'd be able to count the games boasting genuine comedy on more than one hand.

In the grand scheme of things, *Leisure Suit Larry* and *The Bard's Tale* really shouldn't stand out because of their chosen focus.

The Bard's Tale in particular is an excellent example of how gaming should evolve. It has been built with off-the-shelf development tools. In this case, the engine that drives *Champions of Norrath* (so that the primary focus for the team can be on the content and the script. The result is a genuinely funny 2D or 3D hours of gameplay).

Years ago, when studios didn't have to concern themselves with physics engines and particle-based thingummies, the content of games was given much more thought. It's a fair indication of the state of creativity when it's those same franchises from 20 years ago that are being resurrected in order to bring those standards back.

It's unlikely that *The Bard's Tale* will be a huge megahit, but it will be a critical success, and we can only hope that it will prove to be inspiration for other studios in the future. ☹

...John Davison is editor-in-chief of the Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine.

FOUND

GMR SCOURS THE GLOBE



DANCE MAT CAKE

What better way to celebrate your birthday than with this attractive confection made in the form of a Dance Dance Revolution pad? British supermarket chain Sainsbury's was found to have just introduced this product on GMR's recent trip to England to review *Fable* [between delicious mouthfuls of icing, of course]. The official description from the box, "a moist Madeira sponge cake layered with raspberry jam and buttercream, covered with soft icing and decorated with edible decorations" is actually quite tempting. It sounds a heck of a lot better than the last birthday cake our offices have seen, anyway. We figure the cake's existence has more to do with the popularity of *DDR* with 12-year-old British girls than the rise of gamer culture in England, but we're not complaining. More cake, please! ■■



X-MESS

TOO MANY GAMES FOR HOLIDAY 2004

U.S.A.

Last year, November was a bloodbath. The month saw literally dozens of games hit, like Ubisoft's *Beyond Good & Evil*, an award-winner that was discounted to \$10 before 2003 ended. This year, *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within* may find itself between a rock and a hard place—just like its predecessor.

What's a gamer to do, especially one with multiple consoles? With *Halo 2*, *Metal Gear Solid 3*, *Need for Speed Underground 2*, and *Metroid Prime 2* all coming out this November, is there time for other games? Jason Enos, MGS3's product manager, also wonders. "With this fall being one of the hottest holiday seasons for videogames ever," he says, "there's no question that competition, direct or indirect, will play some role in the overall success of any game."

Of course, an MGS-style blockbuster can expect to sell hundreds of thousands of copies. But what about a smaller game from a smaller publisher? NIS America (*Phantom Brave*) is entering the market for the first time. Vice President Johanna Hirota has the

secret, though. "We purposely chose not to release the game closer to the holiday season because we wanted to allow the game to sell to its maximum potential."

Atlus' [Digital Devil] Saga Gail Salamanca echoes these statements. "You run the risk of getting lost in the shuffle," he says. "And if your game isn't up to snuff, you're pretty much committing suicide."

Electronic Arts spokesperson Trudy Muller puts it in perspective: "Top titles continue to get noticed and sell well." But some top titles, like *BG&E*, never do. So this year, remember to pay attention to the little guys, too. ■■

Ubisoft's *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within*

DS IMPRESSES

NINTENDO'S FINAL DESIGN ROCKS

JAPAN

➔ Nintendo revealed a slick new look for its impending dual-screen handheld and announced its official name—drumroll—Nintendo DS.

The revamped DS features larger, slightly reconfigured face and shoulder buttons. Also new are a storage slot for the touch screen's stylus and stereo sound for the speakers.

Nintendo says that 20 first-party games

are in development for its DS, as well as more than 100 from other companies. The launch date and price had still not been announced at press time. ■■

KBOX
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EVAN SHAMOON

PC ENVY

➔ The anticipation for *Doom 3* and *Half-Life 2* has been so intense that I recently spent several paychecks on a new PC in order to play them. And now I can't help but wonder...what the hell was I thinking?

Not only are there more triple-A titles coming out for consoles in the next four months than I could possibly have time to play—*Fable*, *Halo 2*, *GTA*, *San Andreas*, and *Paper Mario 2*, to name but a few—but the whole concept of paying thousands of dollars to play a few games I may never finish seems ridiculous.

As the relative power of consoles inches ever closer to that of their desktop-based counterparts, the issue of "muscle" becomes less relevant. Id Software recently announced that the Xbox version of *Doom 3* will be graphically equivalent to the PC version running on a midrange machine—and that's a full three years into the console's life cycle. And as HDTV's become standard, the issue of resolution goes out the window as well.

What does that leave me as I sit hunched over my glowing monitor? Perhaps it's being three inches from the screen, and the mind-altering, visceral intensity that comes out of it—something I may never be able to achieve sitting on my sofa. ■■

Evan Shamoon is an editor at *Xbox Nation*.

[BLIPS]

Lara's main man returns

➔ *Lara Croft* creator Toby Gard has returned to the series he helped begin. Gard left Core, *Tom Clancy's* original developer, to found his own firm. This resulted in *Gallion* [see page 120]. His move will hopefully help make up for 2003 stinker *Angel of Darkness*. ■■

More Neverwinter Nights

➔ *Neverwinter Nights 2* is on the horizon. In what's becoming a pattern, Obsidian Entertainment has been tapped to develop the game. It has already taken over the helm of another BioWare sequel, *LucasArts' MOTO R 2: NINJA 2*. *NWN2* is not due from Atari until 2006. ■■

[SCREEN]

MEGA64

VIDEO TO VIDEO

210 MINUTES / INCLUDES FIVE EPISODES, COMMENTARY, DELETED SCENES, MAKING-OF FEATURETTE

➔ By now, the first season of *Mega64* should finally be available at Mega64.com. Taking elements from popular comedy shows and mixing them with a hardcore love of videogames, creator Rocco Botte has come up with a show that fans of *Jackass* and *River City Ransom* can enjoy equally.

Botte plays dual roles in the show: Rocko, an average gamer who gets drafted to beta-test a virtual-reality videogame system known as the Mega64, and Dr. Poque, its mad scientist creator. Shawn Chatfield plays Poque's hapless assistant Sean and provides the voice for the evil—or perhaps simply stupid—puppet Marcus. Derrick Acosta is Derek, another victim, and also plays Horatio, Poque's idiotic, dishonest roommate.

"Derrick was a guy whose comic timing was always perfect and was an awesome writer. Shawn was extremely witty and a great comic actor. They just seemed like the perfect guys to share the experience with," Rocco explains.

Using the Mega64, Poque zaps Rocko and Derek into videogames old and new. The first season—five half-hour episodes—encompasses everything from fraught battles within the confines of NES classic *Super Dodgeball* to a hip-hop lament on the death of the Dreamcast.

"I think the original idea was to make it more of a *Jackass*-type show. Just outdoor, public stuff. We talked about it more and more and eventually decided to build a story. In my opinion, a story makes the show more interesting and entertaining," Acosta quips. "But according to what I've heard from the Internet, I'm wrong."

In truth, some of the best comedy is in the "real world" scenes. Horatio in particular steals every scene he's in, just as he steals Poque's CD collection. "I think Horatio is so funny because I hate him and when I play him I can pretty much have him make fun of himself. He's a joke," explains Acosta.

But, of course, the game parodies shine. In the now-infamous *Shenmue* skit—which you can download from Mega64.com—Rocco does nothing more threatening than act like its main character, Ryo Hazuki. But putting Ryo in the real world

illustrates just how unrealistic his adventure really is. "All I did in the *Shenmue* skit was ask people repetitive questions, much like the game itself does, and yet I got the cops called on me," Botte says. "However, we just recently filmed a *Hitman* skit where Shawn attempts to kill Derrick in public, and no one even wanted to deal with us at all."

"It seems that every time I am in costume and about to do whatever embarrassing skit we have in mind, the hottest girls walk right past me and laugh," Chatfield complains.

Acosta concurs. "I'm always afraid that I might run into someone I know. Dr even worse, someone that I only kind of know." But according to him, he'll have his revenge. "We've had a lot of experience using video as a weapon to make people feel uncomfortable."

The first season is just the beginning, according to Botte. "We're involved in a bunch of projects on a bunch of different mediums that we're sworn to secrecy about. But just know that our goal of having *Mega64* invade every facet of life until people are sick of us is close to being attained." As to whether he has any regrets for the first season, it's clear that *Shenmue* has had an unhealthy influence on his mind. "Honestly? Just the fact that I never actually found any sailors." ■



➔ Above, the victims—left to right, Shawn, Derrick, and Rocco—gather around the Mega64 console in a rare moment of joy. Below, *Phantasy Star Online* inspires gang violence.



Why does
gaming professional
Karen Swanson
recommend
The Guildhall?

Simple. She helped design
the curriculum.

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PC
KNOWLEDGE
THEY KNOW STUFF SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO!

JEFF GREEN

DEATH II

➔ If, as certain naysayers proclaim, the death of PC gaming is at hand, at least it is going out like Gary Oldman did in *Sid and Nancy*—in a “blaze of glory.” Because after a fairly serious drought, we are about to get bombarded by a barrage of triple-A PC games. Finally.

Now, I don't happen to think PC gaming is dying at all, so calm down. If it were dying, I would not be typing this, but instead would be dropping off my résumé at the local McDonald's. But you'd have to be a bit of a fool, and a bit myopic, not to acknowledge that this has not been the best of times for the platform. Even with the current consoles nearing the end of their lives, there has been no great PC uplift, which is what happened in the past. Instead, we are seeing more games going to consoles first or exclusively.

That's about to change. With the release of the outstanding *Doom 3* and with other sunfire blockbusters right behind it—*The Sims 2*, *Half-Life 2*, *World of Warcraft*—PC gaming is about to get a huge lift, with lots of folks upgrading just to be able to play these games.

Jump on that bandwagon. *Doom 3* is godlike, and you won't get even half the satisfaction on Xbox. This is one case where the PC really does rule. ☺

Jeff Green is editor-in-chief of *Computer Gaming World* magazine.

GMR CHARTS

TOP-SELLING GAMES FOR EVERY SYSTEM FOR JULY '04

TOP 10 ALL FORMATS

RANK	TITLE	FORMAT	SCORE
01	 NCAA FOOTBALL 2005 College athletes win the big trophy.	PS2	8
02	 ESPN NFL 2K5 Twenty dollars? Yes, please.	XB	8
03	 ESPN NFL 2K5 Budget football rocks PS2.	PS2	8
04	 NCAA FOOTBALL 2005 So you like football, then?	XB	8
05	 DOOM 3 Afraid of the dark?	PC	8
06	 SPIDER-MAN 2 Goes down smartly after the film.	PS2	8
07	 SPIDER-MAN 2 Shame about the repetition, though.	XB	8
08	 TALES OF SYMPHONIA See? We told you it's good.	GC	8
09	 SPIDER-MAN 2 Man, it's hard to write three of these. Stop buying multipatform games.	GC	8
10	 DRIV3R Its day in the sun didn't last.	PS2	5

*Denotes equivalent score by sister publication, Computer Gaming World
NR=Not Reviewed.

PC TOP 10

RANK	TITLE	SCORE
01	DOOM 3	8
02	CITY OF HEROES	8
03	JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING	8
04	SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WWII	8
05	RISE OF NATIONS	8
06	FINAL FANTASY XI	9
07	LIFE OF DEATH: THE CHAOTIC CHRONICLE	5
08	CALL OF DUTY	7
09	FAR CRY	7
10	DIABLO II: LORD OF DESTRUCTION	8

GBA TOP 10

RANK	TITLE	SCORE
01	SPIDER-MAN 2	NR
02	YU-GI-OH! RESHEF OF DESTRUCTION	NR
03	MEGA MAN BATTLE NETWORK 4: RED SUN	8
04	MEGA MAN BATTLE NETWORK 4: BLUE MOON	8
05	DRAGON BALL Z: SUPER SONIC WARRIOR	NR
06	MARIO GOLF ADVANCE TOUR	9
07	MARIO VS. DONKEY KONG	7
08	TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES	8
09	SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 4: SUPER MARIO BROS. 3	9
10	SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 3: YOSHIS ISLAND	9

PS2 TOP 10

RANK	TITLE	SCORE
01	NCAA FOOTBALL 2005	8
02	ESPN NFL 2K5	8
03	SPIDER-MAN 2	8
04	DRIV3R	5
05	WAY OF THE SAMURAI 2	6
06	DDR MAX 2	NR
07	MEGA MAN ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION	9
08	SPLINTER CELL PANDORA TOMBROW	9
09	SHREK 2	5
10	KARAOKE REVOLUTION VOL. 2	8

XBOX TOP 10

RANK	TITLE	SCORE
01	ESPN NFL 2K5	8
02	NCAA FOOTBALL 2005	8
03	SPIDER-MAN 2	8
04	RAINBOW SIX 3: BLACK ARROW	7
05	SUDEKI	5
06	HALO	10
07	DRIV3R	5
08	BRUTE FORCE	6
09	MORROWIND: GOTY EDITION	NR
10	FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR	8

GC TOP 10






RANK	TITLE	SCORE
01	TALES OF SYMPHONIA	8
02	SPIDER-MAN 2	8
03	MEGA MAN ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION	9
04	NCAA FOOTBALL 2005	8
05	ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS ADVENTURES	8
06	WARIOWARE INC.: MESS PARTY GAMES	8
07	SUPER SMASH BROS. MELEE	9
08	SHREK 2	5
09	LUIGI'S MANSION	7
10	NEED FOR SPEED: HOT PURSUIT 2	6

PRE-ORDER MANIA

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TOP 5 PRE-ORDERS

RANK	TITLE	FORMAT
01	 HALO 2	XB
02	 GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS	PS2
03	 THE SIMS 2 Bonus: Free CD with extra Sims 2 content	PC
04	 STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT Bonus: Star Wars Battlefront action figure	PC/PS2/XB
05	 MORTAL KOMBAT: DECEPTION Limited collectors' edition available	PS2/XB

CURRENT PRE-ORDER DEALS

TITLE	FORMAT	DATE
SILENT HILL 4: THE ROOM Bonus soundtrack disc	PS2/XB	09/08
POKEMON FIRE/ICE/LEAFGREEN Free pocket trainer's guide	GBA	09/08
ROME: TOTAL WAR Exclusive behind-the-scenes DVD	PC	09/15
WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR Bonus soundtrack, mini strategy guide and poster	PC	09/21
MEDAL OF HONOR: PACIFIC ASSAULT—DIRECTOR'S EDITION Demo disc	PC	09/21
STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT Exclusive Star Wars action figure	PC/PS2/XB	09/21
DEAD OR ALIVE ULTIMATE Silk wall scroll	XB	10/04
MEN OF VALOR Exclusive DVD of bonus material	PC/XB	10/06
TRIBES: VENGANCE Disc With Strategy: Tribes, multiplayer guides, Ground Control II trailer and demo	PC	10/13
EVERQUEST II EverQuest II starter kit	PC	11/16

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TETSUJIN 28

NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

● JAPAN

➔ Developer Sandlot may not rule the charts, but it commands a healthy niche with games like *Robot Alchemic Drive* and *Earth Defense Force*. Let's face it: There's something irresistible about games that let you level entire cities in the name of saving planet Earth.

Sandlot's latest title offers more of the developer's trademark mayhem with a giant robot flavor. Now, each massive metal punch packs the power of history; *Tetsujin 28* is based on the classic black-and-white anime of the same name. (You might know it by its American title, *Gigantor*.)

Not surprisingly, *Tetsujin 28* plays like a streamlined version of remote-control robot battler *R.A.D.*, except with more epic battles (and plenty of *EDF*'s Saturday matinee-style panicked crowds). But this time, you don't merely topple buildings—they make excellent projectiles as well.

Players take control of a young man named Shoutaro, who

in turn commands the mighty *Tetsujin 28*. Positioning Shoutaro to find a clear line of sight is vital to success, but it's also important to keep him out of harm's way. A single poorly thrown skyscraper will reduce the kid to nothing but a red smear. Think of the children!

The game's plot is classic *Gigantor* fare, but it's mostly just a gleeful excuse to smash stuff. Even better is the challenge mode, which allows you to control the robots you've conquered in a two-player match. Tributes to the anime are everywhere, from the spot-on intro to the grainy look of the title card for each episode. The artwork that propels the plot perfectly captures the look and feel of the cartoon.

Is *Tetsujin 28* a successor to *R.A.D.* or simply a great anime-based game? Trick question—it's both, and it should pique the interest of fans accordingly. Don't ever expect to see this one come Stateside, but giant robo fans should check this out. ☛



➔ Much of the game is peppered with manga Japanese for comic's styled cut-scenes that help propel the story of *Tetsujin 28*. Giant robots rule.



➔ The controls in *Tetsujin 28* are much like those of Sandlot's previous major release, *Robot Alchemic Drive*. Anyone who has ever messed with remote-control cars or vehicles will feel right at home with the dual-analog-stick controls. It's not a simple matter of moving the big junk around like a character in a 3D action game. *Tetsujin 28* requires precision and some getting used to, but once you find that sweet spot, it's solid gold.

INTERNATIONAL
REPORT

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SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

How do publishers expect us to plan our financial futures when they're making us buy all these games? Oh well, looks like no college for U.I. Johnny!

05



06
Arcadium's juiced games out for PS2, Xbox, and PC today

No, it's not a circus-freak-industry sun. It's a spien race, fourie ally

13

Grids (V) (PS2), Call of Duty: United Offensive (PC), Advance Guardian Heroes (GBA), ShellShock: Nam '67 (PC, XB, PS2) are now available

20

Out today: E-Zero GP, Legend (GBA), Star Wars Trilogy (GBA), Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2005 (all), Star Wars Battlefront (PC, PS2, XB), Men of Honor: Pacific Assault (PC) →

27

In store: Full Spectrum War (PC), Star Wars: Hearts of Steel (PC), Donkey Konga (GC), Evil Genius (PC), Shin Megami Tensei: Nocturne (PS2) →



Today's sole release: *Call of Chinthee*. Dark Corners of the Earth (PC). Don't worry, there's more coming. A lot more.

08

Return to King of War (PC), Mopdoo (under Fire: The Crusades (XB), and Burnout 3 (PS2, XB) are now available.



22

Burnout: Total War (PC), X-Men Legends (GC, PS2, XB), Shaman King: Power of Spirit (PS2), Blood Will Tell (PS2), Red Star (PS2, XB), and Monster Hunter (PS2) are now available



16



30

10

Resident Evil: Apocalypse is expanded to the world today. And this one actually features Jill Valentine! The teaser trailer was great, but we're still wary of the final product.

17

Star Captain and the World of Tomorrow opens today. Even the title sounds like it's from the 1930s. What a decade that was. Oh, how we laughed!

24

Not your typical zombie flick, Shaun of the Dead is opening today. We're going to see it just because it's called Shaun of the Dead.

NEXT MONTH!
Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas (PS2), Mortal Kombat: Deception (PS2, XB), Dead or Alive: Ultimate (XB), and Paper Mario 2 (GC).

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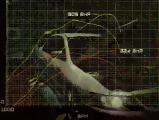
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NEXT



Here at *GMR*, we preview games a little differently. To ensure that our reviews are released within six months, we also record our level of excitement about each game. This is merely a guide as to how good a game in progress is looking. This means that if we're taking a wait-and-see attitude, expect to see three flames. If we think at every stage of a game's development cycle—positive

INCOMING GAMES PREVIEW

PREVIEWED THIS ISSUE:

ACE COMBAT 5: THE UNSUNG WAR	PS2	072
ADVANCE GUARDIAN HEROES	GBA	059
AMERICAN MCGEE PRESENTS SCRAPLAND	PC/XB	062
BACKYARD WRESTLING 2	PS2/XB	056
GUNGRAVE: OVERDOSE	PS2	068
HALO 2	XB	048
KOHAN II: KINGS OF WAR	PC	051
OTOGI 2: IMMORTAL WARRIORS	XB	046
PRINCE OF PERSIA: WARRIOR WITHIN	GC/PC/PS2/XB	043
ROBOTECH: INVASION	PS2/XB	054
SECOND SIGHT	GC/PS2/XB	058
SHADOW HEARTS: COVENANT	PS2	070
SHADOW OF ROME	PS2	066
STAR FOX	GC	050
TIME CRISIS: CRISIS ZONE	PS2	057
WWE DAY OF RECKONING	GC	055



RELEASE | NOVEMBER

PRINCE OF PERSIA: WARRIOR WITHIN

THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING

Platform: PC/PS2/XB | Publisher: UBISOFT | Developer: UBISOFT MONTREAL



Last year's *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* was met with massive critical acclaim, not only for its bold resurrection of Jordan Mechner's classic *Prince of Persia* franchise, but also for the numerous leaps and bounds it made for the 3D-action genre. The game's clever level design and sleek wall-running physics have been aped by numerous other titles since its release—which is a sure sign of quality. Not content to rest on its laurels, Ubisoft is making another go

at it with the sequel, *Prince of Persia: Warrior Within*, which looks to be even more impressive than its predecessor.

In *Warrior Within*, the titular hero is being hunted by an omnipotent guardian of time named Dahaka, who is more than a little irked about the Prince's shenanigans in *The Sands of Time*. The purportedly undefeatable Dahaka now seeks to remove the Prince from the disrupted timeline, prophesizing his inevitable death as punishment for his time-manipulation

transgressions. Players will, once again step into the Prince's acrobatic shoes, guiding him through a brand-new quest to face this dark destiny.

One of the first changes you'll notice in *Warrior Within* is the Prince's look. He's no longer the young, brightly dressed Aladdin wannabe from the first game; instead, the design team has opted for a much darker, more mature look, keeping in tone with the game's sinister plot. The cursed Prince now sports a leather jerkin, with drably colored pants and

forearm wrappings. This somber look is further reflected in the game's oppressive environments—doom and gloom hang in the air, which becomes readily apparent as you guide the Prince across lonely, overcast islands and rollicking, storm-drenched pirate ships. *Pirates of the Caribbean* it is not, however.

All of the quality gameplay elements that you've come to expect from *Sands of Time* have been carried over—with a few new surprises. The combat system has been refined quite



→ The prince's high-flying acrobatic moves are intact and loop-de-loop as ever. In *Warrior Within*, however, Ubisoft has refocused its energies on tightening up the combat (the first game's biggest flaw) and has clearly been influenced by *Ninja Gaiden*.



a bit; the Prince can now pick up the weapons of fallen enemies, allowing for some engaging dual-weapon melee combat. A new combo system has been implemented, letting you carry out a massive number of stylish chain attacks, complete with slow-motion decapitations and other flashy fatality blows. The Prince can also throw his extra weapons—another extremely cool touch.

Boss fights are another significant addition to *Warrior Within*; these were noticeably absent from the first

game, and their inclusion here should make for some interesting battles. For instance, one of the new bosses is a hulking monster that the Prince has to climb on top of and stab. *Fellowship of the Rings* style as the beast furiously flails about.

And, of course, the trademark time-manipulation tricks are back. Though the trusty Dagger of Time is nowhere to be found here, you're armed with a handy magical amulet that can speed up, slow down, and rewind time, giving you the edge over

your unwitting enemies and even allowing you to cheat death. Ubisoft has promised a few new time-related powers as well, though it's extremely tight-lipped about what those might be. We'll find out shortly, this November to be exact, when we roll out the red carpet for the Prince's eagerly awaited return. **B+**

GMA SAYS → This is one holiday release we'll be very eager to get our hands on. All hail the Prince!

→ **HOW HOT...** 🔥🔥🔥🔥🔥



MECHNER'ED

If we're going by the numbers, this is actually *Prince of Persia 5*. Missed the first three or four? Here's a summary:

Prince of Persia (1989): The original action-adventure, filled with swordplay and death-defying leaps.

Prince of Persia 2: The Shadow and the Flame (1993): More fast-paced action—this time in glorious 256-color VGA!

Prince of Persia 3D (1999): A horrible early 3D attempt at the Prince of Persia formula. Avoid this at all costs.

Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time (2003): Last year's glorious resurrection of the legendary series. **B+**





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RELEASE | OCTOBER

OTOGI 2: IMMORTAL WARRIORS

DESTROY ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING. AGAIN

▢ SYSTEM: XB ▢ PUBLISHER: SEGA ▢ DEVELOPER: FROM SOFTWARE



→ The sequel to one of the best action games on Xbox (*Otagi*, duh!) is back and bigger, better, and badder than ever, with six times as many characters, some of the best graphics on the system, and more of the crazy destructible backgrounds that made the first game so distinctive.



If you're interested in instant visual gratification, this is your game. Tapping buttons at random makes *Otagi 2* explode with color. The effect is the antithesis of what From Software usually delivers—instead of being dark and quietly atmospheric, it's a kaleidoscope of fantasy violence.

Immortal Warriors doesn't fool around with the basic appeal of the original *Otagi*. It's still a fast-moving action game valuing speed, destruction, and flashy visuals over complex tactics or difficult puzzles.

The sequel's main difference is the new character selection—instead of the lone hero Raikoh, there are six default characters to pick from.

Raikoh takes the lead, but he's backed up by allies with more specialized abilities: Kintoki, a powerful ax-welder; Tsuna, a swordsman with twin blades; Sadamitsu, a sorceress with a massive scythe; Suetake, a bizarre limbless being with a giant Buddhist icon; and Seimei, the Shinto priest who resurrects Raikoh to fight again.

The expanded cast adds some depth to individual missions and the campaign as a whole. Different warriors have strengths and weaknesses against the different enemies in each stage, summed up by an "affinity" ranking that rates their chances in a given mission, and each of them develops with experience from mission to mission.

The team also spends a shared pool of gold on new spells, weapons, and accessories, though. Gearing up one warrior with exceptional

abilities may leave another character with more limited resources. But that's balanced by a nonlinear mission structure.

It's a tough game, although the upgraded graphics mean even a hopelessly outmatched character can still smash things up beautifully before succumbing to the inevitable. **B+**

GMA SAYS → Pure adrenaline, pure gaming guts and glory. Action gaming at its finest.

→ HOW HOT... 🔥🔥🔥🔥

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RELEASE | NOVEMBER

HALO 2

ON THE GOLDEN SHORES OF ZANZIBAR

CREATOR: 343 GAMES PUBLISHER: MICROSOFT DEVELOPER: BUNGIE



➔ About a minute into the round, it happened. The Red team had fortified the Zanzibar stronghold, turret gunners were in position, and the rocket launcher was ready for the inevitable Blue team rush. A few rounds earlier, the Red team discovered that, while on offense, if they loaded up a Warthog with a driver, gunner, and a passenger carrying the bomb and then immediately advanced toward the entrance of the base, the defense would have little time to react. Even if

the Blue team managed to repel the first strike team, the bomb would still be at their doorstep for the second wave to pick up and plant—this being the objective of assault mode.

Of course, the Blues noticed right away that this maneuver was fairly effective and quickly adopted it as their own. So when their Warthog came screaming off the beach and into the compound, the Reds were ready and waiting. "Here they come!" echoed through their headsets. But what they weren't expecting was the Blue driver's

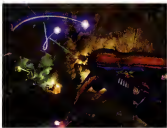
apparent lack of timing. He decided to take his vehicle in from the right side and through the giant fan, but inexplicably, he slowed down just as one of the massive blades emerged from the ground. The jeep got caught, and instead of delivering their volatile payload, the Blues found themselves ascending toward the heavens...and into the crosshairs of Red turrets. Within seconds, the immobilized Warthog was turned into useless scrap, the driver and gunner perished, and the bomb holder bailed out in a last-

ditch effort to save the attack. A Red sniper watching the carnage unfold from 200 feet away had a different idea and plucked his target before he even hit the ground. A successful defense for the Red team, and a great illustration of how communicative teamwork, careful level design, and the solid mechanics of the franchise are going to make *Halo 2*'s multiplayer mode one of the hottest things around this winter.

GMR recently visited Redmond, WA—the home of Microsoft's Bungie Studios—for a full afternoon of *Halo 2*



→ While Bungie remains silent about the game's single-player campaign (Master Chief defends Earth!) the company is starting to get people talking about multiplayer. As of now, we've played three modes: slayer (standard deathmatch), capture the flag (in single- and multi-flag flavors), and assault (one team brings a bomb into the other team's base). More modes and features will be revealed in the days ahead, including fan-favorite oddball, which will assuredly make waiting for November all the more difficult.



action on Xbox Live, with many entertaining scenes like the one described above occurring. The shroud of secrecy surrounding the game was pulled back ever so slightly to allow a better look at the game's multiplayer experience, something Bungie is clearly putting a considerable amount of effort into.

Upon booting the game and signing on to Xbox Live, combatants will create a profile, select a name, decide on default colors, and choose an appearance (Marine or Covenant).

From there, the next step is figuring out how you want to play. Since Bungie believes that the way most current PC games are structured—a lengthy list of servers, IP addresses, map names, and ping times—is insufficient to generate the same atmosphere you get playing with friends in the same room, it has devised the party system as a solution. How it works is simple: You host an arranged game, invite select members of your friends list (it's also possible to spam-invite your entire list) to join the party, and from there on

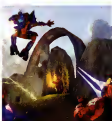
out, you can play as a group, switching between different game modes and settings without losing anyone in the process. Playing on your own means that you'll have to find games through Optimatch, which automatically seeks out and selects the best server based on your connection and given criteria for game styles. Check back next month for even more details. **B+**

GMA SAYS → It's the game you've been waiting for since *Aplo*.

→ **HOW HOT...** 🔥 🔥 🔥 🔥 🔥

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

→ The Internet has blessed this world with all sorts of innovation, convenience, and links to hilarious news stories involving monkeys. Now it also gives us everything we could ever possibly want to know about how we play *Halo 2*. Bungie.net will be keeping track of your in-game performance right down to the most minute detail. The preliminary version GMR saw already keeps track of every single match you played and how many kills, assists, and deaths you registered in each. But the plan isn't to stop there, as Bungie.net wants to go deeper by analyzing what weapons you use on what map and in what manner, so that it's possible to scout the competition (yes, there will be leaderboards). And for those who consider being ranked No. 234,485 out of 2 million a badge of shame, you can choose to just compare your stats against others on your friends list for local bragging rights. The next logical step would be fantasy *Halo* leagues...and honestly, we wouldn't put even that past Bungie. **B+**



RELEASE | NOVEMBER

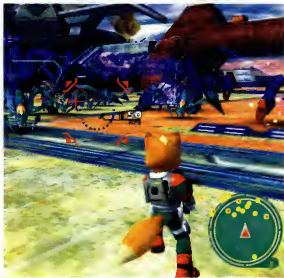
STAR FOX

MAY THE FOX BE WITH YOU

Developer: GC | Developer: NINTENDO | Developer: NAMCO



→ It's taken a while, but both the space battles and the ground-based combat look to live up to the Star Fox name.



Before *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker* drove sales of the GameCube to new heights, Nintendo's *Star Fox Adventures* temporarily replaced Link and his sword with Fox McCloud and his staff. With its lush graphics, complex dungeons, fighting system, and animal-assisted gameplay, *Star Fox Adventures* quickly became a hit in its own right. The franchise has since found its way into the hands of Namco, and while the company doesn't have as much experience in adventure gaming as Nintendo, *Star Fox* (formerly

Star Fox Armada) is quickly shaping into a must-have title.

Namco is keeping silent on the game's plot, but *Star Fox* takes place several years after the events on Dinosaur Planet. Fox and his team of Slippy Toad, Peppy Hare, Falco Lombardi, and the blue-furred vixen Krystal are dispatched by Gen. Pepper to investigate a minor anomaly in a distant sector, but what begins as a standard combat mission quickly escalates and takes on proportions that will affect the entire galaxy.

Naturally, it's up to Fox McCloud to prevent intergalactic catastrophe.

While the first game was essentially an on-foot adventure with the odd aerial engagement, *Star Fox* lets players soar through space in their fighters and trundle across alien terrain in a new Landmaster tank. Also new is a four-player splitscreen battle mode that lets gamers wage war via their Arwings, tanks, and the more traditional on-foot method in which players run around using blasters, sniper rifles, and rocket launchers. The developers have even

included a multiplayer co-op mode that allows four gamers to control a vehicle of their choosing or take a Halo approach to foreign relations by having one person steer and the other aim a mounted weapon. Namco hasn't revealed whether these co-op modes are standalone missions or are an expanded part of the single-player campaign...yet. So hang tight. ☛

GMA SAYS → Could be the *Star Fox* game we've all been waiting for since *Star Fox 64*.

→ HOW HOT...



RELEASE | SEPTEMBER

KOHAN II: KINGS OF WAR

MARSHAL THE TROOPS

DEVISER: PC DEVELOPERS: GATHERING DEVELOPER: TIMEGATE STUDIOS



→ Fans of real-time strategy games will find much to savor in this anticipated sequel to *Kohan*. If you enjoy games like *StarCraft*, give this one a shot.



➔ The original *Kohan: Immortal Sovereigns* debuted in 2001, when the real-time-strategy market was at its peak. Going toe-to-toe with such genre-defining classics as *Age of Empires II* and *StarCraft* was a tall order back then, and *Kohan* was largely glossed over. It's a shame, too, despite its relative visual simplicity and somewhat generic fantasy setting, *Kohan* did a stunning job of streamlining the tedious micro-management and resource-gathering routines that bog down most RTS

games. Fortunately, developer TimeGate Studios is upping the ante this year with a brand-new sequel, *Kohan II: Kings of War*.

The most obvious upgrade to *Kohan II* is the graphics engine. The sequel retains its predecessor's streamlined approach to resource management, eliminating the need for droves of worker units thanks to a simple positive/negative resource tally, which is determined by the size of your army versus the number of harvesting structures you've constructed.

Kohan II has six races and five political factions to choose from, each carrying various economic and combat-related bonuses that cater to a number of different play styles. Armies aren't built as single units, but rather as companies of four or more led by a captain or hero unit. Your troops gain experience over time, eventually evolving into elite fighting forces that you can marshal against your opponent's base. Capturing an opposing city expands not only your borders, but also your army—

captured units will be converted to your side, giving you an even bigger edge over your enemies. There's even a morale system in place; companies will flee if the odds are stacked against them, making tactical play a must, and in a month you'll be able to taste the strategy for yourself. **B+**

GMA SAYS → The RTS market is a tough nut to crack—especially when the bar has been set so high by the likes of *WarCraft II* and *Rise of Nations*. Still, *Kohan II* looks like more than just another sad imitator—which is saying a lot.

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RELEASE | OCTOBER

ROBOTECH: INVASION

CHANGING GEARS

CRYSTEN PS2/XB CRUSHER GATHERING DEVELOPER VODUCYCLE



→ Unlike the original animated Robotech television series, we did not pull these screenshots from three unrelated games and bend over backward to pretend they're all from the same one [Robotech historians, you know what we mean]. These are all actual screens of the same game, which is Robotech: Invasion. At least so far as you know, they are.



→ Funny how sometimes you want something, then it turns out not to be what you wanted at all. If you were to ask Robotech fans what they needed in a game, you might think the soldier/plane/veritech modes in 2002's *Battlecry* would be their answer. And yet, the actual game was merely so-so. On the other hand, they probably wouldn't have asked for a first-person shooter that somehow also involved the Cyclone vehicles, but *Robotech: Invasion* might make fans happy by providing exactly that.

Set between episodes of the Invid story line, *Invasion* puts you in the role of one of the survivors of the Robotech Expedition, whose job is to fend off the marauding Invid. [Since it was your exploration of space that brought the Invid down upon Earth, it's pretty much your responsibility to get rid of them.] Most of this happens in a first-person-shooting environment as you fight your way through alien-looking canyons at night, with plenty of purples and blacks used to increase the

strangeness factor. Granted, part of that strangeness also comes from the spatial warps popping up all over the place that let the Invid through.

Though most of the game takes place in a regular first-person mode, the levels are so huge that your standard foot speed won't get you through them very quickly—and since some of the goals are time based for instance, having to come to the aid of your forces some distance away, you'll need to get around much faster than that. This is where the Cyclone

bike mode comes in. You can switch to Cyclone form at any time, which brings the view out to a third-person perspective as you zip around the environments, dodging fire rather than returning it.

Robotech: Invasion is scheduled for release this fall on PS2 and Xbox with eight-player online support. **E+**

GMA SAYS → Looks good, but when it comes time for third-person alien blasting this fall, is this the game you'll pick?

→ HOW HOT...



WWE DAY OF RECKONING AND THAT'S A SHOOT, BROTHER

Christian GC Publisher THQ Developer Yuke's

➔ Pro-wrestling games have always had a problem capturing the unique nature of...well, "sports entertainment." It's what the WWE calls it. They've tried to make a legitimate interactive competition out of what's really a fixed sport, which never quite works. The excitement and drama of pro wrestling are there because it's not quite "real," but it's hard to plan a dramatic match when fighting a computer.

The best a wrestling game can do is lend an iron logic to the proceedings. If it has to become a competition, make it the most consistent competition possible. *WWE Day of Reckoning* has that consistency, and its feature set shames last year's GameCube model.

Consistency is the key—that and biting plenty of control features from Ali's Nintendo 64 games. Short timing windows and visual cues balance the two-button reversal system. Using one button for weak and strong grapples keeps move sets broad while saving real estate on the controller. That one button can perform quick throws, two-step power moves, and clinches for throwing close strikes. Rational location-based damage and resistance

meters give players a reason for smart ring psychology—submission holds actually work.

What the last game in the series, *WrestleMania*, needed more than anything else was a detailed career mode. *Day of Reckoning* delivers that. Though the early stages are a bit too long, with too much time spent in drab arenas against generic opposition, matches in the WWE's developmental territories provide a well-rounded tutorial, and after that, it's off to the backstabbing races.

Story lines keep a continuous stream of matches flowing in logical sequence, and there are plenty of gimmicks to prevent the action from getting stale. Yuke's has caught its Cube games up in the create-a-wrestler department, too. Designing a distinctive newcomer is no problem with a substantial move library and an appearance editor that has new features like multiple texture layers on clothing. Revenge mode? What revenge mode? *WrestleMania*'s hard-hat hordes are just a bad memory now. **B+**

GMA SAYS ➔ GameCube owners who dig wrestling will dig this, but we're looking to Konami's *Avatar* Rose for some real kicks.

➔ **HOW HOT...**



RELEASE | OCTOBER

BACKYARD WRESTLING 2: THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD

THE SEQUEL YOU NEVER KNEW YOU WANTED

DESIGNER PS2XB PUBLISHER EIDOS INTERACTIVE DEVELOPER PARADOX DEVELOPMENT



→ These ladies love walks in the park, exotic culinary excursions, fine literature, afternoon tea, bonsai gardens, the theater, and listening to books-on-tape. Yeah, right.



→ America is a land that has fought hard for many freedoms. Today, young citizens across this country exercise those freedoms by nail gunning one another's faces and filming it for public scrutiny. Thank God for those who have brought us the art known as backyard wrestling.

Well, *Backyard Wrestling* the game is back, and it's as twisted as ever. While the first game had its fair share of problems, Eidos is pulling out all the stops for the sequel, including adding famed porn star Tera Patrick

to the roster of characters. The star of such riveting works as *Nice Rack 4* and *Open Wide and Say Ahh! 6* will be busting heads alongside some of the foulest characters in gaming history.

More moves and more interactivity with environments are among the new focuses of the upcoming title. You'll bash everything from wooden planks to light tubes over your opponents' heads—and see all the blood and bruise damage register on their faces. You can also break into different areas of the environment

you're fighting in to tear up property and create some serious mayhem. And you'll do all this while rocking out to the tunes of "talented" artists like the Gorilla Biscuits.

Locations include everything from the obvious backyard (where you can have fun with a weed-whacker) to a miniature golf course. Insane Clown Posse is part of the lineup here, but don't stress too hard; aside from Tera Patrick, you also get some hands-on time with the blonde bombshell Tylene Buck, aka Major Guns. And with role

models like El Drunko and The Masked Horn Dog, this game is sure to have the parents of Middle America writing to their congressmen in no time. Kids these days!

Expect to see *Backyard Wrestling 2* out sometime this October. We see you holding back your excitement. Don't be afraid to let go. ☞

GMA SAYS → I wonder what special cheat codes are in store for Tera Patrick's character. Hmmm.

→ HOW HOT...

RELEASE | OCTOBER

TIME CRISIS: CRISIS ZONE

GOING OUT WITH A BANG

Developer PS2 | Publisher NAMCO | Developer NAMCO

The light-gun genre may be dying, but don't tell Namco. It's taken the company quite a few years, but the publisher best known for *Tekken* and *Pac-Man* has finally seen fit to bring its awesome light-gun blaster, *Crisis Zone*, from the arcade to the PlayStation 2. Although originally titled *Crisis Zone*, Namco has fitted the game with the *Time Crisis* moniker for easier name recognition with the home-console market.

Like the *Time Crisis* games, *Crisis Zone* employs the tried-and-true method of shoot-duck-and-reload action that has served the series so well. Unlike the previous games, *Crisis Zone* ditches the handgun and on-screen power-ups (shotguns, semiautomatics, etc.) in favor of balls-to-the-wall machine-gun mania. While the arcade version of the game utilizes a custom machine-gun-like peripheral to do the shooting, the trusty GunCon is wheeled out to do the duty for the PS2 installment. The edge *Crisis Zone*

for home has over the arcade version is that the player (*Crisis Zone* is single-player, alas) may hook up two GunCons and fire them simultaneously so that business can be taken care of in what is commonly referred to as "John Woo-style."

Crisis Zone's big draw, however, isn't merely its intense nonstop action; it's that everything blows up real good. Everything in every environment in the game can be shot, and when it's shot, it blows up, scatters, or shatters. Computer monitors, magazines, tennis ball canisters, barrels, glass windows, etc. You name it, it blows up. A crisis mode offers additional skill-based challenges and replay value for those who conquer story mode in short order. **B+**

GMA SAYS → There's no question in our minds this is the best light-gun game of all time. *Virtual Cop's* got nothing on this.

→ HOW HOT...

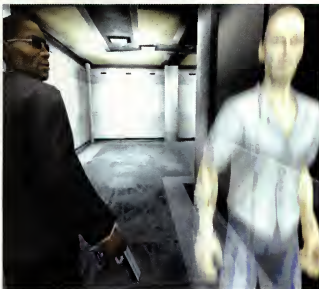


RELEASE | SEPTEMBER

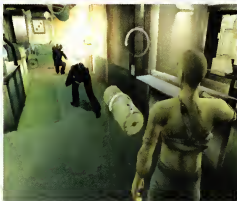
SECOND SIGHT

DIGITAL CONTROL MEETS MIND CONTROL

(D) SYSTEMS (C) PS2/XB (P) PUBLISHER CODEMASTERS (D) DEVELOPER FREE RADICAL DESIGN



→ John Vattic's powers are geared toward the subtle approach. Sneaking by an opponent with telepathic invisibility or distracting them with a little telekinetic fiddling is usually more effective than a full-on psychic slugfest. Early in the game, at least, he doesn't have the power for *Scanners*-style head-explody, so it's best to keep a low profile.



➔ **Second Sight** is quite a departure for its developer. If you used your brain in *TimeSplitters*, you didn't have to use it very long.

Free Radical is on to something very different here: *Second Sight* is a slow-paced psychic action-adventure that owes a lot to *Metal Gear Solid* and almost nothing to *GoldenEye*. *Stealth* and environment manipulation are key, with guns taking a distinct second place to John Vattic's suite of psychic powers.

Vattic begins the game in an anonymous hospital, looking like hell

and feeling worse, under the influence of substances unknown. He doesn't remember a thing, which lets the plot skip between flashbacks as bits and pieces of his memory return. Ironically, he was a professional debunker of psychic phenomena who was pres-ganged into accompanying a special-ops team in Russia. Six months later, the skeptic wakes up with telekinesis and telepathic invisibility, and that's just the beginning of his powers.

The scheme for controlling those powers is a bit different than what

Midway presented in *Psi-Ops*. Like *Metal Gear*, *Second Sight* uses a scene-focused camera that makes it easier to present a neatly set-up puzzle or shootout. Once you get the hang of the objective controls (telekinetically snagged objects move in relation to the character, not the camera), it's not hard to chuck around pieces of the environment and watch the realistic physics in action.

Some of Free Radical's signature style is still here—the character designs share *TimeSplitters*' unusual

proportions—but there's a more realistic look to the environments and models.

The dialogue is surprisingly solid, and the first-person camerawork is top-notch. If the camera can hold together under fire during gameplay, *Second Sight* could prove that there's more to Free Radical's repertoire than straight run-and-gun. **B+**

GMA SAYS → *Second Sight*'s control scheme is still a little fiddly, but hopefully that will change

➔ **HOW HOT...**



RELEASE | SEPTEMBER

ADVANCE GUARDIAN HEROES

POETRY IN MOTION

CHIBITEN GBA CARTRIDGE UBISOFT DEVELOPER TREASURE

➔ This is the kind of game we should see more often on GBA. Treasure's *Guardian Heroes* revival has a lot in common with Capcom's *Viewtiful Joe*—both games feature mostly traditional gameplay livened up with just enough of the new.

Advance Guardian Heroes borrows the name of the cult classic Sega Saturn beat-'em-up, but it doesn't have much in common with the original game beyond the basic "heroes smack down waves of bad guys" formula. In some ways, it's more conventional, supporting two simultaneous players instead of the Saturn's six, but a new character-development system and four-player versus action help close that gap.

Leaving aside the nonsensical cinematics (the plot is hardly the point), this *Guardian Heroes* begins with a choice of three characters. Enn, who is for beginners, has strong attacks and fire magic that makes up for suspect defense. Hyu, Enn's opposite, fends off opponents with strong defense and ice magic that knocks foes off balance. Ray occupies the middle ground with strong lightning-based magic.

Each character has five spells on top of a hefty

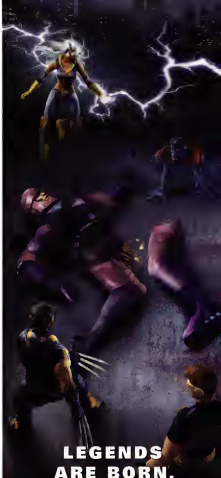
shared attack arsenal—ground and air combos, homing charge attacks, wide-area earthquake strikes, flying uppercuts, defensive shields, and sharp countermeasures for players with quick timing. It's a lot of versatility for an interface that essentially uses just three buttons.

Soul crystals collected in each level go toward upgrading a character's slats between missions, accentuating strengths or smoothing out weaknesses. Alternatively, you can blow crystals on a two-edged continue feature. Die once in a mission and the devil offers a deal for your soul. Clear the rest of the stage within a time limit and you'll cheat him at the cost of all your crystals.

Raw though it may seem, the devil's deal can look pretty attractive at times. *Guardian Heroes* gets very tough, very fast. Like any Treasure game, the boss encounters are spaced about half a minute apart, and they'll definitely give your thumbs an old-school workout. **A-**

GMA SAYS ➔ Few who are reading this will have experienced the Saturn original, but know that this game is going to be the real deal.

➔ **HOW HOT...**



9.24.04

X-MEN

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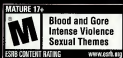
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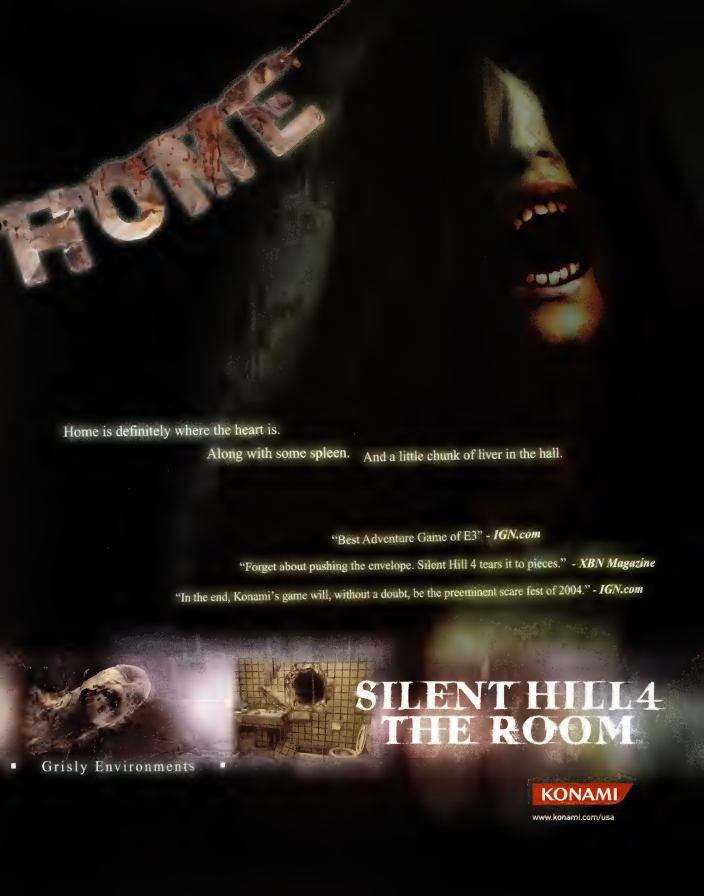
■ New 1st Person Mode ■ Riveting Story ■ Ghostly New Creatures



PlayStation 2



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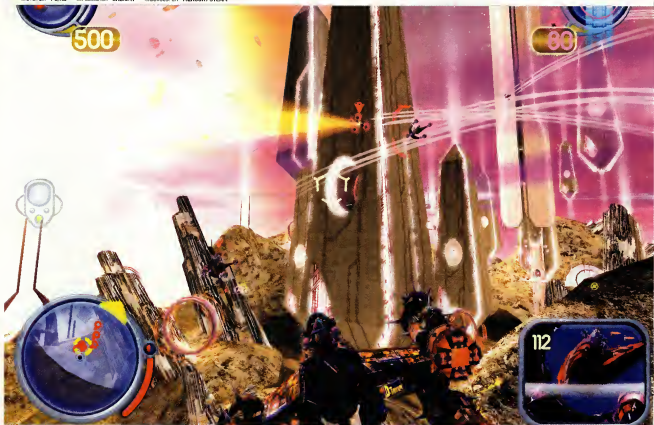
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RELEASE | WINTER

AMERICAN MCGEE PRESENTS SCRAPLAND

I. ROBOT

DISTRIBUTOR: PC/MAC DEVELOPERS: ENLIGHTENED DEVELOPERS MERCURY STEAM



Robots, robots everywhere! These mechanized automatons are the stars of the show in *Scrapland*, an upcoming action-adventure game presented by designer American McGee. Unlike McGee's previous efforts—his darkly imaginative *Alice* and the ever-delayed *Oz*—this game is no storybook fantasy. Mercury Steam has enlisted the veteran designer's talents to help add a little bit of polish (not to mention name recognition) to an odd tale of robots, spaceships, and murder.

The star of *Scrapland* is D-Tritus, a self-created patchwork of scrap metal. As the game opens, D-Tritus has just arrived in Chimera, one of the metropolitan cities built on the game's titular planet. The world of *Scrapland*, it seems, was turned into a junkyard by the greedy humans who inhabited it years ago. The robots worked to salvage what remained after the humans left, eventually naming their newly re-created utopia *Scrapland*—where humans are no longer welcome.

D-Tritus comes to *Scrapland* seeking a job and quickly gets stuck with the work no one wants to do: reporting for the local newspaper. Most of *Scrapland*'s newsworthy events involve illegal activities such as gambling and smuggling—and seem to result in a high death rate for nosy journalists. Fortunately, the planet's Great Database houses copies of all its inhabitants, allowing the dead to be revived for a small fee. Unfortunately, the database doesn't seem to be working right—and

someone is on a killing spree. As the mystery escalates, it's up to the hapless D-Tritus to figure out what's going on.

Scrapland's gameplay motif is somewhat reminiscent of the *Grand Theft Auto* series'. The world is presented as an open-ended environment with several core missions to undertake as you progress through the main story line; additionally, there are various extra missions and minigames to keep you busy past that. The design team has touted the game's



→ A vast world full of resources that humans heedlessly mined and pillaged? Robotic automations taking a stand against living, breathing people? The ascension of A.I.? Yeah, it may sound like something out of *The Matrix*, but *Scrapland*'s gothic artistic sense is a far cry from many of the other grim and gritty worlds that have surfaced in recent years. And with American McGee working behind the scenes, there's no telling what might pop up.

AMEA...WHOP?

→ The man behind *Scrapland* has a pretty impressive pedigree attached to his goofy name. Here's the skinny on some of American McGee's past and future projects.

Quake II (1997): Before *Alice*, McGee was a level designer for Id Software, with such masterpieces as *Quake*, *Quake II*, and *Doom II* to his credit.

Alice (2000): This game is no fairy tale—it's a disturbing journey into the world of a little girl who's lost her mind. We'll never look at the Cheshire Cat the same way again.

City of the Dead (TBD): McGee is collaborating with legendary horror director George Romero on his next project, which he promises will be "the goriest game ever made." ☠☠



clear mission objectives, claiming that players will never be left wondering what to do next.

The game encompasses two main modes of play. While on foot, D-Tritus is armed with a handy camera that allows him to merge with the planet's various citizens, which grants our hero a plethora of special powers and abilities—you'll be able to pick pockets, set off police alarms, and reach out-of-the-way locations.

The other mode allows you to pilot a number of different gunships with

which you can engage in a fast-paced, streamlined combat system. There are also races—and money—to be won. Funds acquired from completing missions can be used to upgrade your gunships with the latest new weaponry and gizmos, allowing you to customize your ship as you see fit. This feature also extends to the game's online multiplayer mode, where players can form teams of customized gunships to battle and race against others.

Scrapland is a unique game with a unique look—the game world is a

colorful and animated amalgam of strange environments and some very odd character designs. The two years it has spent in development have been a definite benefit from an artistic standpoint, and American McGee's recent involvement can only mean interesting things for this kooky robot tale. ☠☠

GMA SAYS → It may not be American McGee's *Q2*, but *Scrapland* is definitely a fresh design. It probably won't out-GTA *GTA: San Andreas*, but it's still worth a look.

→ HOW HOT...



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RELEASE | NOVEMBER

SHADOW OF ROME

IF ONLY TELEVISIONS HAD WINDSHIELD WIPERS

SYSTEM: PS2 PUBLISHER: CAPCOM DEVELOPER: CAPCOM



→ The game is incredibly brutal and bloody for the most part, with the crowd getting ever more excited by your gory antics. You can even pump up the audience with a cheer. If you're lucky, they'll toss you a weapon or other special item.



Having conquered feudal Japan with the *Onimusha* series, Capcom has set its sights on Europe's past. *Shadow of Rome* continues the company's string of PS2 slash-em-ups—and just in case you're already bored of 'em, there's more than a dollop of stealth, style, and gore.

Shadow of Rome places your hand on the sword of Agrippa, a young gladiator whose father is accused of assassinating Caesar. In typical Capcom style, the story unfolds through head-scratching cinemas as

Agrippa battles to get close to those he believes are behind the conspiracy against his pops. Good idea or not, it results in bloody battles.

And when we say bloody, we mean it. Attacking your enemy will resort in fountains of gore—nothing new there, of course. But if you manage to slice off an enemy's limb, you can pick it up and beat him down with it. According to Producer Yoshinori Ono, "It wasn't our intention to make such a violent game. What we were really going for...was to try to show what it was really like in

those days." The more brutal you get, the more excited the crowd becomes.

The game's combo system rewards experimentation and flourish with dozens of special moves—you won't be limited to the repetitive whack, whack, thud of most games. Instead of bare floors, *Shadow's* arenas are full of traps, like spinning blades. "You really have to use that environment in the best way," says Ono.

Agrippa isn't alone, though. His pal Octavianus also steps up to the challenge. "They're friends, and they're

both committed to finding out who killed Caesar and freeing Agrippa's father," Ono explains. Since Octy's a wimp, he aims to discover the conspiracy by using his head instead of his arms. He sneaks around Rome, collecting information in puzzle-filled stealth missions. If Capcom can get the balance just right, *Onimusha 3* will have an exciting new brother in arms. **B+**

GMA SAYS → The game may be ridiculous, but the action is tight. We hope it all comes together.

→ HOW HOT...



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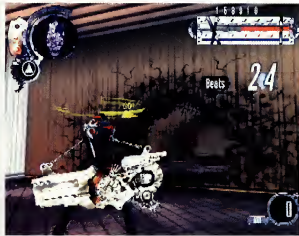
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RELEASE | OCTOBER

GUNGRAVE: OVERDOSE

LOCKED AND MOST DEFINITELY LOADED

Platform: PS2 Developer: RED ENTERTAINMENT Distributor: MAGIFF



→ If you liked the original *Gunggrave* (published by Sega), you're going to love *Overdose*. Two new unique protagonists have joined *Beyond the Grave* to blow stuff up, including bad guys, vehicles, and boss characters.



Any game with "kick their asses" as a mission objective merits watching. The original *Gunggrave* was a victim of the *Max Payne* syndrome, a shot of pure action that didn't last long enough. Just when you got into the groove of alternating between shooting up the place and giving someone a face full of coffin, the game was over. Enter *Gunggrave: Overdose*, which literally triples its predecessor's length via a trio of heroes.

Yes, *Beyond the Grave* had two buddies with him this time, Juji Kabane

and the superbly named Rocket Billy RedCadillac. Each character has a distinct play style: Grave, still using his guns and enormous coffin, is a good mix of ranged and melee combat. Juji Kabane is a profanity-laden blind swordsman whose specialty is, surprisingly enough, melee combat. Yeah, his swords have pistols attached to them, but he's much cooler slicing into people and deflecting bullets with his sword. Most awesome of the three is Rocket Billy RedCadillac, who waits on his guitar to shoot bolts of energy

Sure, he can't hit anything next to him, but who cares—he uses a guitar! Not only do these characters have distinct play styles, but thanks to character designers Yoshiro Nightow (*Trigun*) and Kosuke Fujishima (*Sakura Taisen*), they actually look cooler than your typical mafioso/swordsman/rock star.

These new guys aren't immediately playable, though—but then again, they're not difficult to unlock. You run into them in the second stage out of nine (already an improvement over the original's six),

and you can easily start a new game with them. No matter who you play as, the core gameplay is the same: run through the level, blow stuff up, rack up "beat points," and occasionally pull off slick demolition shots. So, if satisfying your nihilistic impulses is a top priority, *Gunggrave: Overdose* is the game to beat. **A-**

GMA SAYS → The action is faster and more furious, with trips the dude count, but will it get repetitive?

→ **HOW HOT...**



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PlayStation 2



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RELEASE | SEPTEMBER

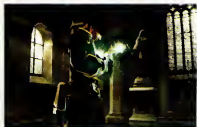
SHADOW HEARTS: COVENANT

OF GRAYS AND GREENS AND SHADOWS AND HEARTS

SYSTEM PS2 DEVELOPER MIDWAY DEVELOPER NAUTILUS



→ The Ring Judgment system adds an element of action to combat that makes *Covenant*'s battle system more involving than the usual role-playing fare. Sure, you're still pressing the X button a lot, but now you have to press it at just the right time. But don't despair if your reflexes have been dulled by years of passive role-playing games: You can customize the size and setup of each character's ring to match your rhythm skills (or lack thereof).



It must suck to be an RPG hero. You finally save the world (and the girl) after hours of power leveling, random battles, and annoying fetch quests. Then it's sequel time, and you're back to level 1 with crappy gear and useless spells all over again. Yuri, the hero of *Shadow Hearts: Covenant*, has it worse than usual. First he loses the love of his life, and then some obscure Christian cult comes along and shoves a twig of mistletoe into his chest to seal off his cool metamorphic powers.

Like its predecessor, *Covenant* is a traditional turn-based RPG with a few unique twists. For starters, there's the real-world setting: The story opens in war-torn France, 1915. Of course, you'll find plenty of fantasy on hand via magic, demonic transformation, and martial arts puppeteering, but the historical backdrop shapes both the visuals and the plot. Plus, it gives Yuri an excuse to spend time with shapely Teutonic lieutenant Karin Koenig, whose sexy way of wearing an iron cross just might help him forget about his lost love.

Covenant also expands on its predecessor's innovative Ring Judgment attack system, requiring carefully timed input to maximize combat effectiveness. Characters can even use the ring system for team combo attacks that dish out extra damage, making battles feel a little like a cross between *Paper Mario* and *Chrono Trigger*. Micromanagement junkies will be pleased to hear that *Covenant* offers plenty of opportunities for character customization—particularly for main man Yuri as he struggles to unlock the

numerous beasts within himself.

But perhaps most intriguing is the role of the Catholic church as the bad guy. Countless Japanese RPGs pit their heroes against shady religions, but *Covenant* may be the first that's honest enough to admit that it's vilifying the Vatican. We just hope this sequel will be as entertaining as it is audacious. **B+**

GMA SAYS → Don't tell your obsessively religious aunt about this one.

→ **HOW HOT...**





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RELEASE | OCTOBER

ACE COMBAT 5: THE UNSUNG WAR

SOMEONE PHONE BRITNEY AND GET THIS WAR SONG

Platform PS2 Developer NAMCO Designer NAMCO



→ As you can see from these screens, Namco's team has concentrated on creating ever more realistic visuals for their Ace Combat series. Despite the fact that you're soaring over a fictional country, expect the dogfighting action to pull you in.



While the three PlayStation installments of the Ace Combat series flew more or less under the radar, PS2's *Ace Combat 04* assaulted gamers with big improvements that helped it earn massive popularity. And with online play being the only notable omission from the upcoming *Ace Combat 5: The Unsung War*, it's clear that Namco has put more than a token effort into bettering its predecessor.

The team has upgraded the game in just about every (offline) way. By the time you get around to unlocking every

plane in the game, your hangar will be bursting with more than 50 units at your disposal. These range from F18s and MiGs to Namco-designed units. Some planes are specialized for air-to-air encounters, and some are better at air-to-ground combat, giving you a real reason to choose one over another.

Since you're a member of a squadron, this is an important distinction: You're responsible for outfitting not only yourself, but also the wingmen who fly with you, and you can direct their tactics. In return,

they'll constantly communicate with you by radio, keeping up a steady stream of chatter that relays important facts about the mission or elements of the game's story.

And if Namco's usual high-quality CG doesn't suck you in, maybe the enhanced environments and new mission types will.

As you fly, you'll notice an environment below you that is much more detailed than the flat, blurry images of older flight games. Naval battles, recon, rescue, and escort

missions set against backdrops of tropical islands, snowy mountains, and bustling metropolises all come your way. The mission pathway even branches depending on your actions and how you respond to your team.

With a basic arcade mode rounding out the options, it's clear that *The Unsung War* should cater to all comers old and new. **B+**

GMA SAYS → Nothing new, but Namco has the formula down by the fifth installment. Polished and ready to fly.

→ HOW HOT...



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HIGH

➔ 2004 is the year of the racer.

If you're interested in almost any variety of virtual driving at high speeds, there's a title coming out before this holiday season to suit your style, whether it's the arcade flash of *Need for Speed* and *Burnout*, the hardcore simulation of *Gran Turismo* and *Forza*, the classic feel of *OutRun 2*, or the down-and-dirty style of *NASCAR* and Atari's newly revamped *Test Drive*.

We've nailed down what look to be the top five racers coming out this fall, the games that should deliver the best combination of challenge, longevity, and flat-out speed, plus the extras like career modes and head-to-head online play that more and more fans are starting to expect from a top-notch racing game. Read on to see the best games cruising up to the starting line.

By David F. Smith
Illustration by Rey S. Serrano



GRAN TURISMO 4

THE 800-HORSEPOWER GORILLA

PS2 | NOVEMBER | SCEA



RACE THE RING



➔ *GT4's* biggest achievement in the track-modeling department isn't the beautiful New York and Hong Kong courses—it's the virtual Nürburgring, the massive German circuit that has tested the world's race cars since 1927. Its 13 miles and 73-odd turns (too much for earlier games to hold in memory) are so challenging that Formula One gave up on the Ring in 1976. However, carmakers from around the world still use the circuit to tune their latest models. **1C**

➔ *Gran Turismo 4* was a bit of an oddity at E3. Fans went into Kazunori Yamauchi's presentation expecting to see online racing and new network features. They walked out an hour later after viewing a presentation that covered redesigned interface screens and virtual photography.

On the one hand, it was a bit disappointing, but on the other, it was a reminder of just how sprawling *GT4* promises to be once it ships. It's a bit staggering to think about what will presumably wind up in the final package: more than a century's worth of cars, from Gustav Daimler's first four-wheeled automobile to the latest auto-show concepts; the world's most famous cities and racetracks; realistically animating drivers; drag races, rally races, road races, GT races; a photography mode for more sedate car enthusiasts; and an online mode we know nothing about yet.

GT4 won't quite be all racers to all people, but Polyphony Digital is obviously aspiring toward that eventual goal. At this point, if there isn't something or somewhere you want to race in this game, you have some unusually specific tastes. The nifty new timeline interface, which groups the game's 500-plus cars into categories divided up by time and region, covers just about

every area of automotive interest, whether it's '60s American muscle cars or miniature Japanese sports cars of the '80s.

Once the whole package finally comes together, what's next? At E3, Yamauchi seemed to have as much to say about *Gran Turismo's* future as its present. "Evolving a world simulation that's true to life" was how he summed up Polyphony's future plans. With the automobiles themselves simulated to near perfection (a feat repeatedly proven by comparisons between in-game and real-life lap-time and performance data), the next step is to refine the realism of the people inside the cars and the world around them.

That's a tall order for a developer to serve itself. Cars may be complex, but humans are another matter entirely, to say nothing of something so madly unpredictable as the weather. Yamauchi says he's already experimenting in that direction, though, and claims that cranking up the computing power behind the *GT4* physics engine has already realized impressively detailed results.

With the power of a next-generation console at its disposal (read: PlayStation 3), all bets are off as to what Polyphony could do next. **1C**

THE FAST PITCH

●●● There are a lot of unanswered questions here for a game that's supposed to hit the market in a few months—we've seen the cars and tracks, but where's the online mode? Here's hoping it really manages to make a 2004 release...

●●● At this point, everybody knows why you play *Gran Turismo*. This is *Gran Turismo*, but a whole heck of a lot more so—if that's your thing, you've already lined up to buy this one.

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TEST DRIVE: EVE OF DESTRUCTION

TIME FOR A LITTLE DIRTY DRIVING

PS2/XB | AUGUST | ATARI



➔ Back in the day, the *Test Drive* games were about driving cars you'd never touch in real life: Ferraris, Lamborghinis, Porsches—the usual supercar suspects. Twenty years later, though, we've all driven virtual versions of every exotic European import under the sun, and those licenses cost an arm and a leg now anyhow. It takes a little more creativity and ingenuity to make a *Test Drive* racer unique these days.

Monster Games, the new developer of *Eve of Destruction* lit cut its teeth on *NASCAR Heat* before taking over *Test Drive* from Pitbull Syndicate), has an unusual idea as to what constitutes an exotic racer. Unusual, but not bad by any stretch—who wouldn't want to wreck a hearse at top speeds? Especially if it can die in a spectacular wreck with a disused school bus.

There's a bit more to it than that, of course. Monster's *NASCAR: Dirt to Daytona* was Atari's last go at a stock-car sim, which is too bad, because the game's innovative career mode deserved a second shot. It's getting one after a fashion, though—*Eve of Destruction* is structured in almost the same way. The single-player campaign begins with shade-tree

junkers competing in figure-eight races and destruction derbies, eventually building up to the racing big time.

In practice, the early stretches of the career mode are like a redneck take on *Need for Speed Underground*. Instead of the city at night, there's a rural crossroads on a lazy weekend afternoon, as well as drag-strip action down at the local diner and dirt-track racing at the fairgrounds on Saturday night. A fistful of race modes neatly balance speed and demolition racing—very few purely reward one area of expertise or the other. Something like the whip-around race (instead of blazing around a circuit, you have to turn around and go the other way at the end of each lap) demands speed, quick handling, and durability all at once.

The one hole in the presentation is the soundtrack, which is uncharacteristically dominated by new-school metal. A game that seems to endorse Tom Wolfe's contention that Junior Johnson is the last American hero ought to have a little more of a country twang to it—the Allman Brothers Band, say, or Lynyrd Skynyrd. Would Molly Hatchet be too much to ask for? If you're going to take the series in a new direction, why not take it all the way? ☛

DIRT TO DESTRUCTION



➔ Unlike *Gran Turismo* or *Need for Speed*, *Eve of Destruction* doesn't encourage getting attached to a personal automobile. In fact, in the demolition derby events, you'll probably go through junkers like potato chips. It's possible to partially fix a car that gets banged up, but permanent damage can't be repaired for any price. That's no problem, though—there's always a new ride going cheap down at the local scrap yard, and improved models appear all the time. ☛

THE FAST PITCH

●●● *Eve of Destruction*'s hayseed style may just as easily rub some racing fans the wrong way. If highly tuned, perfectly polished, gazillion-dollar race machines are what you're looking for, this probably isn't your best first choice.

●●● Whether or not it bears much of a resemblance to any other *Test Drive*, this game presents a style of racing that hasn't been touched on in a triple-A title before. Hardcore *NASCAR* fans (the ones who follow something besides the Nextel Cup) should definitely take note.

NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2

BRIGHTER LIGHTS, BIGGER CITY

GC/PC/PS2/XB | NOVEMBER | ELECTRONIC ARTS



➔ The sequel to *Need for Speed Underground* has big shoes to fill. After all, the first one is only the best-selling racer since *Gran Turismo 3*. "If I were to tell you I wasn't surprised," says Executive Producer Chuck Osieja, "I'd be lying."

EA's Black Box studio isn't resting on its laurels (or, to put a finer point on it, its millions and millions of dollars). *Underground 2* begins with a concept that wound up on the first game's cutting-room floor—the notion of a complete free-roaming city environment—and runs further with it than the first game ever could have.

Other racers have fooled around with a nonlinear game world. *Tokyo Xtreme Racer* lets you cruise around highways and pick races at random, while *Midnight Club* created its courses out of whole urban cloth. *Underground 2* does all of that and then some, to the point that the game refuses to drop out of the city into a less immersive interface. Whether it's drag racing, circuit racing, a drift competition, a parts shop, or simply a chat with fellow drivers, it happens somewhere in the one continuous world.

EA won't even own up to everything that will be available

in the city as yet—some game modes are still under wraps. At the very least, the *TXR* style of gameplay is available in the new outrun mode, which offers spontaneous races against other cars driving around town. Meanwhile, a wider variety of environments (like the hills on the outskirts of town) adds a twist to more familiar race modes.

"What *Underground 2* focuses on is giving the player choice," Osieja explains. "Where do I want to drive in the world? What events do I race in? What events do I skip? What shops do I find? We want to give players the same choices in the game experience as they have in customizing their cars."

And there's a story to hold it all together, although the game's narrative is another area that's waiting for later revelation. Perennial lads' mag cover girl (and former *Wild On* television show host) Brooke Burke has something to do with it—maybe Black Box's development contract calls for a hot celebrity guest star as a reward for meeting a certain sales goal—but those details don't necessarily matter much. The racing is the important thing, and *Underground 2* looks to have plenty of that. ☛

BLACK BOX CUSTOM



➔ *Underground* didn't offer much in the way of real performance customization—upgrade parts are basically just stickers on the side panels. The sequel changes that, letting you tune performance to your individual taste in more than 20 areas and enter race events that cater to a particular setup, from drag races for dominating engines to twisty mountain races for drift fiends. There's even an unrevealed race mode for showing off wild cosmetic mods and audio systems. ☛

THE FAST PITCH

●●● *Underground 2*'s developers have bitten off a pretty big mouthful with their plans for an open game environment. Keeping the player focused while offering such a wide variety of options may be a difficult balance to strike.

●●● The original *Underground* proved that Black Box has a knack for capturing the spirit of tuner culture—the game has just the right amount of attitude but no more. With even more input from the street-racing world, the sequel should be that much more authentic.

IN STORES SEPTEMBER

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PlayStation.2

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OUTRUN 2

EVERYTHING AND THE GIRL

PS2/XB | AUGUST | ATARI



EYES SIDWAYS



➔ The smart OutRun driver spends a significant part of any race driving at full opposite lock. Drifting is critical to clearing the toughest turns in the main outrun mode, and the young lady in heart attack mode often demands as hard a drift as possible. That's no problem—OutRun 2's arcade-born physics, "a synthesis of AM2 3D racing games," (like Daytona and Super GT) according to Producer Makoto Osaki, makes sliding through the corners an absolute blast. 🏁

➔ Of all the racers coming out this year, *OutRun 2* is by far the simplest. No tuning or tweaking, no paint shop or parts garage. No nonlinear story mode. No online car dealerships, no hearses or school buses, no splashy simulation engine to wax poetic about until the audience is nuts-and-bolts'ed into submission. But it has one thing to claim over all the rest of the competition—the cute girl in the passenger seat.

OutRun has been about presentation ever since the game's birth back in the '80s. The first title's innovations had very little to do with control or gameplay, after all. It plays more or less like *Pole Position*, albeit *Pole Position* with a little more elbow room than a simple racing circuit offers.

What was new in *OutRun* had everything to do with the experience surrounding that simple gameplay. The Ferrari Testarossa, the switchable radio tracks, the beautiful environments of each expansive stage (one of the earliest uses of Sega's 16-bit "Super Scaler" arcade technology), and, of course, the hot blonde riding shotgun (hot by 1986 standards, at any rate). The entire package came together to prove that a game didn't have to just provide a challenge to the reflexes—

aesthetic appeal could be as important or even more important than a game's controls.

Nowadays, we have games that consist entirely of presentation without even the core of something as simple as *Pole Position* to hold them together. *OutRun 2*, despite its flashy artwork, cutting-edge Xbox graphics, and the untold expense of the Ferrari license, isn't willing to go that route. It's been a while since the glory days of Sega's arcade racing games, but this is still a worthy heir to that tradition.

Those games were great because they were simply fun to drive. *Super GT* delivered unprecedented graphics and the most expensive cars imaginable at the time, but it was the brutal challenge and balls-out drifting that truly set it apart. *Daytona USA 2* made a simple banked superspeedway one of the most challenging and compelling tracks in racing history because its creators put in the time to make the handling that exciting and the sense of speed that palpable.

OutRun 2 is the same way. The presentation is brilliant, and the expanded challenge modes are much appreciated, but the real appeal is still the fun of putting the hammer down and watching it go. 🏁

THE FAST PITCH

⦿⦿⦿ Gearheads looking for any kind of simulation experience will hit a brick wall here. The handling is as arcade as it comes, and there's nothing to tweak or customize. But then, why would you do a custom job on Ferrari perfection?

⦿⦿⦿ Developer Sumo Digital isn't willing to just port the arcade version home. *OutRun 2* on Xbox will pack in Xbox Live support for eight players and many more solo driving challenges, plus other additions to be announced.

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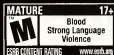


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PlayStation 2



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FORZA MOTORSPORT

THE HOT YOUNG ROOKIE ON THE CIRCUIT

XB | NOVEMBER | MICROSOFT



➔ If Sony's dead silence about *Gran Turismo 4*'s network mode has you looking for an online racing alternative, Microsoft is frantically waving to grab your attention right now. *Forza Motorsport* is hitting Xbox Live this fall with online competition and a lot more for community-minded drivers to try.

Forza on Live ties into the single-player game in some interesting ways. Career mode limits the number of cars available according to the selected region (American racers can't buy some European cars, for instance), but Live provides an open market to exchange exotic and tuned-up rides. Players with a knack for tuning might even be able to set themselves up as online mechanics or dealers, making a profit off their expertise.

The idea of an online racing community isn't new. PC racers have sustained continued interest through online leagues and series, and EA's *Motor City Online* married that to a persistent tuning and racing world. It's uncharted territory on consoles, though, and *Forza* definitely has the lead at this point when it comes to carving out a stake.

Artificial intelligence is another area where Microsoft is looking to trump Sony's game. A.I. has been a perennial

stocking point for the *Gran Turismo* series—it's a "real driving simulator," sure, but are you competing against anything but a stopwatch, really? Even in *GT3*, the opposing racers seem to be there only to provide a colorful background, just marking places as they pass by. Despite claims of it being a "real racing simulator," none of the opposition shows much aggression, resistance, or, indeed, any personality at all.

Forza's developers, on the other hand, say they've got serious programming muscle going into creating intelligent, realistic opposition that can learn from experience. "Even our A.I. difficulty levels are based on learning artificial intelligence," says design lead Peter Greenawalt. "Lower-difficulty A.I. makes humanlike mistakes such as late braking and late apexing."

Smarter A.I., they say, can perfectly drive a course even with unpredictable humans buzzing by, but it's not just there for sparking carbon-based players. A side benefit is the Drivatar system, which encodes a human's tendencies into an A.I.-driven counterpart—race a few laps and it learns basic abilities, keep training it and it'll drive even more like you do. Top drivers can spawn themselves around Xbox Live and burn the competition without even lifting a finger. 14

TUNE IT UP



➔ *Forza Motorsport*'s selection of tuning options reads like the introduction to a car mechanic's manual. Powertrain upgrades include exhaust, intakes, forced induction (turbo or supercharger), and nitrous oxide; aero kits include everything from wings to head- and taillight mods; and handling is affected by brakes, suspension, clutch, transmission, tires, weight reduction, and more. And, of course, the paint shop lets you doll up a car's exterior with as much or as little aesthetic taste as you like. 14

THE FAST PITCH

●●● For all Microsoft's confidence, this is its first attempt at such an ambitious simulation racer. Sony's had years to perfect its own physics engine, so we'll see if Microsoft can match *Gran Turismo* in its first go-round.

●●● If the simulation engine is there, all the other pieces are in place. Microsoft is ponying up some serious licensing money (*Forza* has the Ferraris that Sony won't shell out for), and Xbox Live promises to lend this one serious longevity.

自然



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DUEL MASTERS
TRADING CARD GAME
RAMPAGE OF THE SUPER WARRIORS

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ABLE

PETER MOLYNEUX EXPLAINS
HIS VISION FOR FABLE

➔ Since the 1989 debut of *Populous* (see "Peter Moly-Who?") Peter Molyneux has been a big name in gaming. He's now the president of Lionhead Studios, his own development house, which worked with Big Blue Box to create *Fable*. But while *Populous* made it to consoles, most of his bigger hits have been confined to PC. *Fable* marks the first time his particular brand of gaming has been served up in a console-exclusive title, so we sat down with him and got him to explain just what makes this adventure tick and what we can expect from the future of the *Fable* franchise, if indeed it becomes one.

GMR: It seems that Western-developed games—especially RPGs—are on an upswing for this generation. Why?

PM: I think a lot of it is because they seemed to just die out for a while. And I think that all of us had this global "God, I haven't played a great RPG for a long time [feeling]" and went off in our own little ivory towers and started scribbling away and creating our own RPGs.

The second reason is I think there was a lot of opportunity. And I still think RPGs will be cooler—they're evolving into something different. More than just an RPG, it's the emergence of this virtual world [that] you play the game inside, which looks beautiful.... It's tough to do, but really, really interesting. It's really exciting to feel you're building these abilities for people to create and roleplay characters. That is a fantastic feeling when it works.

GMR: What do you think works about the good/evil gameplay system?

PM: Giving people the ability to be a bad guy....it's the freedom of choice. It's allowing players to be, to a certain

extent, the character that they want to be. Again, that's a really, really powerful thing. And sometimes those are very, very subtle little choices, and it's pretty easy to think of evil things to do and a little bit harder to think of good things to do. And that's part of it, but it just really rolls up into one thing, and that one thing is that, for me, I always have this fascination with anything that tells me a bit about myself.

And maybe that's not a big thing. In a way, that's what I wanted from *Fable*. I didn't want it to have completely obvious choices.... I wanted it to be a tiny bit more subtle than that. And there are choices, and if you go through to the end of the game, there is a big, big, big choice, as there should be. But essentially, I wanted people to play around with the character that they ended up being.

GMR: Do you think that a game with a dark/light system imposes its values on the player?

PM: We're giving the players more and more of the ability to be as dark as they want, and we're not impressing any moral values on them. One of the

things we're pretty careful about with *Fable* is to show there's no huge advantage for being good over being evil, so you don't read the tips page and say, "Oh, the only thing you can do in this game is be good because otherwise it's harder or more boring." It was a case of balancing out the two.

The interesting thing is, what does that say about how you guide people? I would say that giving people the choice and showing them the consequences of that choice—even if those consequences are pretty simple, like you looking meaner and eviler and people being scared of you—is a fairly subtle thing. Even if someone plays the evil side, you still see the moral consequences of it.

GMR: *Fable* breaks down into two fairly distinct things. There's the main quest and there are the towns. Did you find it hard to integrate them?

PM: This is one of the things that went way up and down like a roller coaster. At one point, I became worried that nobody would spend any time in the towns at all. There's a lot of stuff you can do, but what I didn't want to do was force it down people's throats, which is a real temptation. You think, "People bloody well [better] play every bit because we had to work for months on that!" But actually, I think it's better to be more gentle with it and not require it.

There's some stuff that makes you laugh in towns. There are people who, if you interact with [them], will take part in the story in towns. But you can take a pause from the story if you want to and play around in the world. Some people do that for an extraordinarily long time. I think it's more the charm of the game, being able to do that.

GMR: Did you find it difficult to balance the complexity of the design with the simplicity of making a game that's playable?

PM: The thing is, I still think that the design was a little bit complex, to be honest with you. I still feel that people struggled with things. But would I still want this game to be simpler and then deeper? Oh, absolutely. There's lots of stuff, and lots of stuff to do with Live and multiplayer.

GMR: You cut the multiplayer.

PM: Yeah. That was my biggest regret, probably. The multiplayer option would

have been really cool. Co-op play, I think, is the coolest thing. How often have you played a game with a friend and just passed the controller? It would be great to have that. But we might have ways of getting it back.

GMR: Was time or technology the limiting factor in what you created?

PM: Earlier on we had the trees growing and the bushes changing and the paths changing. We put so much processing power into doing that, that we had to limit the other visions. And would it really make a difference if the trees grew and all of that? Not really. So that was just a dumb idea as it turns out.

Toward the end of the project—and this was a big, big thing—nobody wants you to have any new ideas. Your publisher doesn't, the team doesn't, the press doesn't. Nobody wants you to have new ideas, but you can't stop yourself from having them. You just have to sort of shut yourself up.

GMR: Where did the team look for inspiration for this game?

PM: In most design meetings I sit in, rather than guide, you hear virtually every [time], "We should make it as polished as *Zelda*, we should have it as free-form as *Grand Theft Auto*, we should have it as cinematic as *Metaphor Solid*." And whilst all of those comparisons are great to do, they're all usually used as a way to win an argument, as opposed to a way to be inspired.

And so I think it's much healthier to first say to people, "Look, don't think about an idea in another person's game or the way they did something. If you really want the inspiration, think about how you felt when you played that game at that particular moment. Because that's the inspiration you really want to get."

I don't think we ever booted up any other game and said, "Let's look at how they did it." I don't think we ever had to do that. There were times when it was tempting to do that, especially for the fighting mechanics, but you end up taking such a snapshot view of it, and it's usually far more involved than just that. If you're having to struggle with an idea or a concept and you're having to force yourself to look at other things, then often it doesn't [work]. Not for me.

GMR: What's the gap between the original concept you had for *Fable* when

you started the project and what you ended up with? How has the project evolved?

PM: The vision in your mind always guides you—the vision in my mind is much, much closer to the final game nowadays. It's not perfect by any means, but it's not a million miles away. What I didn't really think about in the first instance was the complexity of the combat system. But what I did consider was this immersive virtual world.

GMR: What prompted you to allow gay marriage in *Fable*?

PM: We were talking to loads and loads of people about *Fable* on this [German] TV show, and we had this poll about requested features for *Fable*—and the No. 1 requested feature from the German public was gay marriages. The No. 1. I don't know what that means.

We had marriage already. Funny enough, when we did the marriage thing, we had to put code in to not have gay marriages; it's harder to not have them than to do them. So what we decided was [that] we'd make it a little bit tougher to get married. You'd have to find the right people and the right place. We'd just reflect the real world. Why not? These things exist. Whether you approve of them or not, they exist. We don't shove it down people's throats....

Cathy Campos, Lionhead PR:

[Laughing] Can't you think of a nicer way to say it?

PM: But if you want to go out there and find it, and you go and make the effort, you can do it.

GMR: In *Fable*, you're getting into the character's skin, making your own moral choices. But you're limited to being a white guy. Do you think that limits the audience or hurts the game?

PM: In a perfect world, I would love to have [customization] where you set your hero up. But the trouble with that is the morphing stuff. When the hero moves to evil, all of his facial bones change. It's not that easy to do. I think if we were to go on and do more *Fables*, we would allow customization for that reason. But it's a ton more work to do it really well.

GMR: So where do you think *Fable* is going to go from here?

PM: Obviously, whether or not we do a sequel or what happens to the property really solely relies on how successful it is. And I suppose we will be touching wood, crossing our fingers, and praying to the gods that it is successful. But I have, in the back of my mind, a clear vision for *Fable* 2, 3, and 4. Beyond 4, it gets a little bit hazy. There are some absolute, definite things with *Fable* 2 that I would love to do.

My view on sequels is that they absolutely have to be more amazing and more wondrous and more inventive than the original was, especially the second [time] around. Normally in this industry we're used to seeing sequels that are little steps forward, but I think big steps are the important thing. The only thing about big steps is that big steps take longer to do, so people wait a long time. So one of the ideas is to take a small step, something smaller than a sequel perhaps. We'll see. **14**

PETER MOLY-WHOP

➔ *Fable* isn't this luminary's first game to embrace the theme of good and evil.

2001: *Black & White* [PC]



Play God and raise a mythical beast. How it turns out is up to you.

1997: *Dungeon Keeper* [PC]



His first dip into the dark, this sim pits you against treasure hunters.

1989: *Populous* [multi]



The original God game, *Populous* made Molyneux's name.

NOW

You like your Xbox, don't you? Yeah, we like ours, too. That's why we looked eastward and journeyed westward for exclusive reviews of the year's biggest Xbox games that aren't Halo 2. And what the heck, we'll throw in reviews of Sudeki and Galleon for good measure. Oh yeah, and a little game we like to call Doom 3, which will eventually land on Xbox.



HOW WE RATE

1 AWFULNESS 2 CRISTINELY 3 PITIFUL 4 DOOS 5 AVERAGE 6 GOOD STUFF 7 RECOMMENDED 8 EXCELLENT 9 TOTALLY SICK 10 TIMELESS CLASSIC

WARNING! WHERE MULTIPLE VERSIONS OF A GAME ARE REVIEWED, WE'LL MENTION DIFFERENCES ONLY IF THEY SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT THE GAMEPLAY.

YOUR GUIDE TO THE GMR SCORING SYSTEM

REVIEWED THIS ISSUE:

ASTRO BOY
BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN
DEAD OR ALIVE ULTIMATE
DOOM 3
DYNASTY WARRIORS 4: EMPIRES
ESPN NHL 2K5
FABLE
GALLEON
GRADIUS V
GUILTY GEAR X2 #RELOADED
HOT SHOTS GOLF FORE!
JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING
NASCAR 2005: CHASE FOR THE CUP
NHL 2005
PHANTOM BRAVE
PINKIE 2
SHELL SHOCK: NAM '67
SILENT HILL 4: THE ROOM
SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WWII
SPY FICTION
STREET RACING SYNDICATE
SUDEKI
THE GUY GAME
VIEWTIFUL JOE

PSS	098
PSS/XB	111
XB	109
PC	100
PSS	110
PSS/XB	106
XB	091
XB	120
PSS	094
XB	110
PSS	098
PC	095
GC/PSS/XB	102
GC/PSS/XB	107
PSS	112
GC	104
PSS/XB	115
PSS	115
PC	125
PSS	112
PSS	102
XB	114
PSS/XB	115
PSS	094





→ Become consumed with goodness or evil. Or play it straight down the middle—difficult, but possible. The way you approach the game dictates the way you can play it. And if you get sick of one extreme, you can always switch at helpful chapels to the gods of good and evil.



FABLE

THE NEXT STEP

MATURE | XB

PUBLISHER MICROSOFT
DEVELOPER GIGAWATT
STORIES
PRICE \$49.99
RELEASE AVAILABLE NOW
PLAYERS 1
DESIGN U.K.

➔ **Fable begins with a clumsy narrative and obvious tutorial bits, belying its actual appeal with decidedly noncopic storytelling, largely told via narration, which remains just as dull the whole way through. It's not until you move into the real meat of the game that the reason to play this ambitious RPG becomes obvious.**

As a young hero, it's up to you to forge your path in the world. You do this largely by accepting quests from your guild, but your approach to these quests and how you decide to accomplish them is what determines your character's demeanor and skills. Fable, the evolutionary RPG: the one that lets you choose your path.

While this pathfinding is subtler than *Knights of the Old Republic's* transparent multiple-choice "be good" or "be evil" responses, there's rarely ever doubt as to which path you're exploring. But unlike *KOTOR*, in which many claimed being good was tedious, *Fable* rewards you evenly based on your approach.

So too does the game's battle system. Whether you focus on brawn, magic, or stealth, you'll find that you can always enjoy the game. Though it rewards you based on the way you play, you're not locked in, and this keeps the system beautifully balanced.

The game can be difficult. This makes *Fable's* magic system particularly pleasurable. Each spell is useful and

unique, and however you're playing, you'll unlock abilities that complement your approach. The sword swinging and bow action are also well designed. Spending points on these skills really results in marked improvement, as does practice; just as your character grows, you'll feel yourself getting better.

But both the magic and combat systems are held back by clunky controls that see the Xbox controller overflowing with functions. It's hard to block when you're busy trying to attack, cast spells, and keep targeted at the same time, with each using a different button. The four face buttons alone are recycled three or four times. Add in a slew of redundant, awkward menus, and



[APPEARANCES] U GOT THE LOOK

➔ Unlike in most RPGs in which your character's look is set in stone or MMOs in which you fully craft your appearance at the outset, *Fable* takes a more unique approach in keeping with its themes of choice and dark versus light.

Your clothes and appearance affect your alignment, as well as your "attractiveness" and "scariness," which in turn will dictate people's reactions to you and your evolution as a character.

You can choose tattoos, hair, and beard styles just as you choose your equipment. All of these help you build a character that matches your taste and approach—assuming you wish to be a white male, that is. ♣



things begin to get obscured—a dose of streamlining would really benefit the game's control.

But, of course, *Fable* is more than a competent hack-n-slasher with moral choices. It's the "emergent gameplay" that's causing the buzz—tricking the game into providing unplanned experiences. Its towns are lively, and the inhabitants will react to your appearance, alignment, and accomplishments. You can have sex, get drunk, get married—or bribe cops, steal stuff, and slay entire villages.

It's almost like a bawdy, medieval *Animal Crossing* for adults. But you lack true control; moreover, things don't change unless you change them,

making the world feel shallow. Though you usually have the freedom to do as you will, important characters are often completely exempt from your meddling (or even exist only in cut-scenes).

Although the towns are a big part of *Fable*, they rarely gel with the adventuring aspects. You're either doing one or the other. But *Fable*'s world is a world, even if it's a limited one. That's more than you can say for most RPGs, even ones like *Dark Cloud 2* or *Soulcalibur III*, which dabble in similar diversions. If you decide to play *Fable* as a straight RPG, you won't be hooked—but if you really exploit all there is to see and do, you'll likely find it quickly becomes a personal favorite.

Fable fumbles toward excellence. There has rarely been such an obvious and concrete example of a genre's awkward adolescence. It takes concepts other games have explored, serves them up in a new light, and hopes to be noticed and loved despite its spots and cracking voice. *Fable* is not a bold evolution of the genre so much as a necessary growth spurt. ♣

—Christian Nutt

GMR 8¹⁰

BETTER THAN *SUKERO*
NOT AS GOOD AS IT COULD BE
WAIT FOR IT FINAL FANTASY XI

2ND OPINION

This is truly the greatest story ever told on Xbox, served with a wacky save system. Equal parts bold, brilliant, and boring, *Fable* asks the very real question, what kind of hero will you be?—and then lets you discover the answer yourself. *Revisited* ♣

—Greg Girdle

REVIEWS BY GREG GIRDLE



“Weapons
inspectors
have found
NO threat.”

—August 24, 1964



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DEV. TREASURE	PLAYERS 1-2
RE. AVAILABLE NOW	ORIGIN JAPAN

GMR 8/10

BETTER THAN: IKARUGA
ON PAR WITH: R-TYPE FINAL
DON'T FORGET: R-TYPE DELTA (PS1)

GRADIUS V

A BOLT OUT OF THE BLUE

TEEN | PS2

➔ Much like the classic *Gradius* games of old, the glittering new episode—*Gradius V*—is a hardcore, skill-based twitch shooter in which only the caffeinated will survive. Games like these don't come around very often these days, so fans of eye-drying, laser-blasting, rocket-thrusting action should rejoice, for the *Vic Viper* has returned.

It can't be easy being a pilot in a weathered spacecraft, fending off thousands of enemies while dodging suspiciously slow-moving projectiles and maneuvering through grinding, churning levels. And yet, that's exactly what you do here. When it comes to shooters, the boys at Treasure sure know their stuff. These former Konami programmers, who have since gone on to become one of the most revered game-development studios in the industry, are responsible for shooters such as *Radiant Silvergun*, *Silpheed* (PS2), and the punishingly difficult *Ikaruga*. Happily, *Gradius V* lies somewhere in between these games in

terms of innovation and difficulty.

The *Gradius* games have always been difficult, and *V* is no different. Learning the patterns and levels is as important as ever, and players will, with practice, master the best ways to power up their *Viper*. Fast, fluid progression through *Gradius V* is as close to gaming rapture as you're likely to find. However, catch an errant shot broadside, and you'll find finishing any level with an unequipped stock-standard *Viper* a grueling process. Thankfully, Treasure has toned down its tendency to design shooters as a never-ending series of boss fights here. Perhaps handling another company's license triggered some restraint, but in any case, the results are impressive. Two-player action can get a bit confusing, though, and the game will appeal to a niche audience only. But for those with the fever for quarter-crunching thrills, consider the eagle landed. **B+**

—James Mielke

VIEWTIFUL JOE

BETTER THE DEVIL YOU KNOW

TEEN | PS2

➔ You know the score by now. *Viewtiful Joe* is an old-school neo-2D brawler wrapped in shockingly sexy supertoon graphics that's bolstered by innovative play mechanics and some of the most shamelessly awesome voice acting ever grafted to a videogame. Plus, the hero, a Power Rangery megadude by the name of *Viewtiful Joe*, is by far one of the coolest characters ever pipped out in polygons.

Fans and onlookers alike will be glad to know the game has survived the transition from GC to PS2 flawlessly. The graphics still consist of the same great faux 2D storybook backdrops, while the characters (Joe, Captain Blue, Sylvia, etc.) carouse, cajole, and kick-flip around like the origami cartoon kung fu fighters they are. The key distinction here is the addition of uber-guest-star, Dante, of *Devil May Cry* fame. While his inclusion as a playable character might seem like a gratuitous, tacked-on bonus at first, in practice, this couldn't have been more perfect—it adds Dante's cocky "air-laure and signature moves

(brilliantly adapted for use in the game), some hilariously twisted "voice acting," and a familiar, yet unique spin to the *Viewtiful Joe* formula.

Each level (no matter which character you're playing as) is constructed of clever puzzles that take advantage of Joe's innovative V-moves (March Speed, etc.) to speed up or slow down time, which is ingenious and gratifying in ways that, say, *Blink* the cat never quite achieved. Simply put, you need to play this to understand.

Whether you own it on GameCube or are simply a fan of great action games, *Viewtiful Joe* on PS2 (at a budget price no less) remains a compulsory purchase. **B+**

—James Mielke

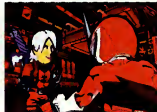
PLAY CAPCOM	PRICE \$29.99
DEV. CAPCOM	PLAYERS 1
RE. AVAILABLE NOW	ORIGIN JAPAN


GMR 9/10

BETTER THAN: BLINK
NOT AS GOOD AS: NINJA GAIDEN
WAIT FOR IT: VIEWTIFUL JOE 2



➔ *Devil May Cry*'s Dante truly makes *Viewtiful Joe* worth playing all over again, even if you own the original GameCube version. His trademark ballsy attitude and acrobatic moves remain completely intact, and his "script" has to be heard to be believed. If only Capcom's other games featured voice acting this good.





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→ NovaLogic has attempted a few other massively multiplayer games before (*Only Force* being one example), but its efforts have usually been overshadowed by EA's *Battlefield* juggernaut. After the success of *Joint Operations*, though, EA's modern-combat answer, *Battlefield 2*, is due out next year. Nice to see that even the mighty EA isn't impervious to a little healthy competition.



JOINT OPERATIONS: TYPHOON RISING

OPEN UP AND SAY "BLAM!"

MATURE | PC

PUBLISHER: NOVALOGIC
DEVELOPER: NOVALOGIC
PRICE: \$29.99
RELEASE: AVAILABLE NOW
PLAYERS: 1-16 (8 OFF SCREEN)
SERVER: ONLINE
COUNTRY: U.S.A.

➔ First, the obvious question: Is *Joint Operations* better than *Battlefield 1942*? Yes, if all the pieces come together. But without good players backing you up and a well-populated map, you're screwed. That's what you get for relying upon 149 people online on 50-kilometer maps set in modern Indonesia.

The entire game is skewed toward team tactics, which means coordinating your actions to stay alive. Have any idea how big 50 kilometers in a game really is? You will, as you hunt down choppers and transports to ferry you back to the battle. *Battlefield* junkies who have been yearning for modern weaponry will not be disappointed, because the vehicles

handle like a dream. While you won't find any tanks, you will find a lot of mobile transports. Choppers are especially key, since NovaLogic has rendered them idiosyncratic. Sure, there's no pride in the mastery of controlling a chopper (like in *Battlefield Vietnam*), but the system ensures that if some moron on your team hops into the cockpit, he won't kill everyone onboard inside of five seconds.

Simply based on the fact that there is virtually no single-player mode in *Battlefield*, *Joint Operations* was bound to be better. Right? Wrong. The single-player campaign is basic training with moron-bots in boring, canned scenarios. The main reason you'll play this game is for the team matches, which have each

side progressing in a chain of choke/control points and trying to take the enemy HQ. This ensures concentrated fighting in one place, as you know what point needs to be fought over next. Considering NovaLogic has been trying to do this for years, it's about time the company beat *Battlefield* at its own game. At least until *Battlefield 2* comes along. **C**

—Darren Gladstone

GMR INDICAL STRIKE
8/10

ANYTHING'S BETTER THAN *SOLDIER: SECRET WARS*. DON'T CALL IT A COMEBACK, THEY'VE BEEN HERE FOR YEARS.
WAIT FOR IT, *BATTLEFIELD 2*

2ND OPINION

It's hard to say whether *Joint Ops* is ahead of its time. Technically and design-wise, everything is in its place, but as with most online games, finding a large group of people who are competent enough to take full advantage of the sheer scale of it all proves difficult. But if you can, the game shines brightly. **C+**
—Andrew Pilster

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PlayStation 2



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HOT SHOTS GOLF FORE!

FORE SCORE

EVERYONE | PS2

➔ Before you dismiss *Hot Shots* as a cutesy golf game with a dated swing system (no analog swing!), you owe it to yourself to play a round or two. This isn't *Tiger Woods* with its Nike swooshes and unabashed PGA marketing. It isn't *Links* with its superbly crafted online mode, either. Rather, *Hot Shots* is the perfect offline game of golf. It's fast paced, full of creative shot making, and chock-full of fun unlockables—there's no denying the addictive power of *Hot Shots Golf Fore!*

While *Hot Shots* employs a two-click swing system, it doesn't scale anything back in terms of realistic physics, nicely contoured courses, and fiendishly tricky greens. While *Tiger* and *Links* deliver the hype, brands, and authentic courses of the golf world, *Hot Shots* doglegs its approach toward "wacky" characters and its own signature courses. The 24 characters and 15 courses make for great replayability, not to mention the fact that everyone quickly becomes attached to their character of choice (no longer does every dude in the room have to be Tiger).

Online, *Hot Shots* goes out of bounds a bit with its approach. Head-to-head, things are fine. But tournament mode, with support for up to 32 players, becomes mired in

loading screens, leaderboards, and other pauses that get in the way of the game's brisk pace. It's still an interesting exercise in showmanship, however, as you'll definitely learn from some of the better online players.

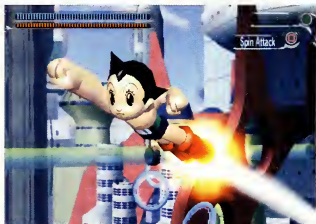
One of the cooler aspects of the actual gameplay comes from the "perfect impact" system. Fore requires players to not only press the button at the right moment to get a straight shot, but also to press the button with smooth and even pressure. It's very similar to real golf in that you can't tense up or try and whack on the ball in frustration... nice and easy is what brings good results.

If you're out for a break from the sim world of other golf games or you want something that will entertain a roomful of people and keep the action moving, you absolutely can't lose with *Hot Shots Golf Fore!* **C-**
Dan Leahy

FOR RENT	PRICE	\$4.99
100 CLUB RING	PER PLAY	1-20 GROUND
100 AVAILABLE NOW	OPTION	JANU

GMR 8¹⁰

BETTER THAN LINKS
ON PLAY WITH TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR
STILL WISHES IT WERE GOLDEN TEE



ASTRO BOY ASTRONOMICALLY UNDERWHELMING

EVERYONE | PS2

➔ A robotic anime wonderboy defending his futuristic hometown against the onslaught of a mad scientist's twisted machinations. A wacky family consisting of a goofy-looking inventor and a plucky, bright-eyed little sister. An evil yet badass "twin" archnemesis. A library of high-tech gadgetry that gradually accumulates along the way. No, this isn't *Mega Man*—it's *Astro Boy*.

Even though it was the original inspiration for the story of the *Mega Man* franchise, Sega's *Astro Boy*—based on the recently revived animated series of the same name—is actually quite a bit different in the gameplay department. In fact, aside from a few bells and whistles, it's a fair-to-average 3D action-adventure romp. The vast majority of the gameplay consists of guiding Astro around Metro City and undertaking linear missions assigned by his various friends and contacts. New powers, such as flight, laser beams, and supersenses, are unlocked as the game progresses—often just prior to a big fight in which you'll need to utilize your new power to defeat some hulking boss robot.

Unfortunately, that's pretty much all

there is to the game. The main story missions are, more often than not, exceedingly simple, and while there are a few side quests (including a card-collecting scavenger hunt on behalf of Astro's sister), there isn't much here to create any real replay value. One gets the impression that *Astro Boy's* gameplay has been tailored toward a younger audience, which—if that's the case—ultimately works to its detriment.

But the game's most glaring problem isn't its simplicity—it's the camera. What little real challenge there is exists solely because of the horrendous camera controls. Getting good angles on the action is a high impossible task, and many of the boss fights tend to shakele you into an automatic lock-on view, which makes things highly inconvenient.

Astro Boy is littered with impossibly colorful characters and environments and a pretty decent physics engine—it's a shame the gameplay doesn't follow suit. This game might make an amusing weekend diversion for the kids, but if you're hankering for a fulfilling 3D action game, stick to the *Ratchets* and *Jaks* of the world. **D-**

Ryan Scott



FOR RENT	PRICE	\$29.99
100 CLUB TEAM	PLAYERS	1
100 AVAILABLE NOW	OPTION	JANU

GMR 5¹⁰

NOT AS GOOD AS ZONE OF THE ENDERS 2
CAMERA DESIGN 101: RATCHET & CLANK: GOING COMMANDO
WAIT FOR IT: RATCHET & CLANK: UP YOUR ARSENAL



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ANDRÉ 3000  DAVID LACHAPPELLE



[MULTIPLAYER] U A TEH DOOM3D

➔ Doom 3's multiplayer mode is of limited appeal. Not nearly as robust or extensive as a game like *Unreal Tournament 2004*, *Doom 3* offers a bare-bones (some might call it "classic") deathmatch that's originally limited to four players, though enterprising server operators have upped that limit to 12. If you're in search of an experience that harkens back to the good ol' days of Quakeworld, where tight maps and simple weapons separated the good from the gibbed, this might be what you're looking for. All others, please proceed to *UT2004*'s onslaught mode.



➔ The flashlight plays an integral role in the game, for without it, you wouldn't be able to see such pleasant sights as this unfortunate fellow hanging by his ankles. At least he's dead!



DOOM 3

ABANDON ALL HOPE. YE WHO ENTER HERE

MATURE | PC

PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: ID SOFTWARE
PRICE: \$49.99
RELEASE: AVAILABLE NOW
PLAYERS: 1-32 (ONLINE)
OS: PC

➔ After putting out some of the most influential games of the past 10 years and then spending the last four years crafting one of the most highly anticipated games of modern times, everything comes down to expectations. Was *Doom 3* worth the wait? That answer will vary from person to person, so it should be no surprise that in the end, what you get out of *Doom 3* is equivalent to what you put in. Anyone who expects it to be a technical masterpiece will assuredly come away impressed. But anyone who expects it to be equally amazing in the gameplay department might well wonder where the last four years went. The truth actually lies somewhere in

between, and expectations should be adjusted accordingly.

Adjusted to its highest graphical settings, *Doom 3* is indeed a stunning sight. Textures are crisp and clean, and finding the smallest evidence of awkward-looking polygonal angles takes effort. Even at the middle and lower settings, the game maintains excellent visuals, and the overall art direction serves the sci-fi setting well. But what's most impressive is the use of light and shadow to not only accentuate the detailed interiors, but also to create the desolate, desperate atmosphere of the distraught Mars outpost. Every once and again, a game will inspire the comment, "Graphics

aren't going to get much better than this." *Doom 3* is one of those games, and developers who license Id's new engine will have chosen wisely.

In contrast, *Doom 3*'s game mechanics are neither revolutionary nor evolutionary in any discernable way. As *Doom 3* is a retelling of the story first spun in the original *Doom*, it's not surprising that the ideas are roughly the same: A lone marine with big guns journeys from point A to point B, destroying lots of zombies and demons along the way. On the other hand, *Doom* is now 10 years old, and it's not unreasonable to want to refresh an old theme with new ideas.

The game relies on building feelings



→ Shock moments abound in *Doom 3*, which, aside from spooky visuals and flickering fluorescent lights, provide much of the terror factor.



of tension, apprehension, and anticipation; early on it succeeds, but near the midpoint, it has taught you exactly what to expect—that is, enter a room, trigger enemy appearances, clear room, repeat. The feelings of fear evaporate, and what's left are tasks that are routine in the first-person-shooter genre. It's unfortunate because though the last third of the game takes place in the most interesting environments, by the time you get there, everything seems tiresome: A pair of imps suddenly spawns near the access door. Genuinely shocking at the beginning, this is now old hat. A Maggot appears from out of nowhere and slashes you. That's just annoying.

Even if your experience matches

your expectations, *Doom 3* still sends out mixed messages. Juvenile monster designs and cheesy moments in the script undermine the genuinely frightening parts as well as the impressive design and detail of the environments. As horror-based games go, *Doom 3* can't decide if it wants to be popcorn (*Resident Evil*) or pop psychology (*Silent Hill*).

So now that taking the serious approach to *Doom 3* has been ruled out, it is probably best to play the game with the following expectations: A lone marine with big guns will destroy lots of zombies and demons. Anyone who has had any experience with any Id-developed shooter knows that when it

comes to the finer points of shooting and maneuvering through 3D space, the developer is a master of the craft. Enemies and weapons are well balanced, progression through the Mars base is even and steady, and the locations are varied enough to keep things interesting. By taking this approach, *Doom 3* is simple, effective, and ultimately enjoyable. **A-**

—Andrew Plister

2ND OPINION

A technological powerhouse, *Doom 3* is an innovation that stands up to advancements in the genre—A is Halo—it is not. This is a great no-brainer action game that's satisfying your bloodlust for the time being until more cerebral delights arrive. In the form of *Half-Life 2*. **A-**
—James Maltre

GMR 8¹⁰

BETTER THAN FAR CRY
NOT AS GOOD AS UT2004 (MULTIPLAYER)
WAIT FOR IT: MITHRA PRIME 2, ECHES



PS2 BUNDLED
DEV: NINTENDO
PUBL: NINTENDO
PRICE: \$49.99
PLAYERS: 1-4 (ONLINE)
GENRE: RACING

GMR 6/10

ON R. 1. WITH MIDNIGHT CLUB II
NOT AS COOL AS VIN DIESEL
WANT FOR IT: NPS UNDERGROUND 2

STREET RACING SYNDICATE

SAME CAR. NEW COAT OF PAINT

TEAM 1 PS2 [REVIEWED] | GC | XBOX

➔ If you've ever wanted to live out all the facets of a *2 Fast 2 Furious* lifestyle without stepping out of the house, the 300-turned-Namco racing game *Street Racing Syndicate* covers all the bases for the couch-bound gamer.

There are no dramatic overtones sewing together the gameplay, but the goal is still to become the hottest street racer around. You'll hop from checkpoint to checkpoint across a gigantic city map, entering different kinds of races and earning cash, respect, and girlfriends along the way.

In fact, Namco readily encourages engaging with all sorts of ladies. You can only associate with one at a time, but the more time spent together, the more movies that open up. The videos are merely models in skimpy clothes grooving to mediocre rap, but who's complaining?

Except for the emphasis on female persuasion, there is little to differentiate *SRS* from the plenty of other street racers either available now or coming soon. An added amount of customization is great for car fiends, but with no story linking the action together, gamers are racing and upgrading only to fill up the progress screen, race a new city map, and earn the tag of best virtual street racer around.

There are online and splitscreen options to help extend the game's life beyond the solo arena, but a distinct lack of gameplay variations limits the potential. The ability to bet your car online is very cool, however.

Junkies who can't wait for *Need for Speed Underground 2* can seize a quick fix with *Street Racing Syndicate*. Just don't expect anything new. **C-** Patrick Klepek

NASCAR 2005: CHASE FOR THE CUP

HIGH-OCTANE TESTOSTERONE

RATING PENDING | PS2 [REVIEWED] | GC | XBOX

➔ EA Sports has always had a winner on its hands with the *NASCAR* series. Good looking, true to the sport, and challenging, it's been a gearhead's dream since its inception. One area where the series has been lacking, however, is in capturing the rich backstory and ongoing story lines that develop over the course of any given *NASCAR* season. The sport's personalities are what have fueled the *NASCAR* phenomenon, and *NASCAR 2005: Chase for the Cup* puts the show on center stage.

In place of the arcane career mode is the fight to the top mode. Here, you start as a true nobody and have a series of challenges to complete before competing in the big-time Nextel Series. Fight to the top is similar to a "choose your own adventure" novel, as on- and off-track decisions forge your career: Will you be the brightest star in the *NASCAR* lexicon, or do you want to be known as the Darth Vader of the circuit? While it might seem like a trivial choice, EA's hero/villain

system actually pays off in gameplay. Villains and heroes alike can use the new Intimidator button to turn the asphalt into their own personal playground. And if you just can't settle things inside the circle, take it off the track in head-to-head street races.

With the improved online play, expansion of the popular lightning challenges, and inclusion of Chase for the Cup (10-driver, 10-race series associated with the Nextel Cup), *NASCAR 2005* has enough horsepower to last you any year. **B+**

-Dan Leahy

PS2: EA SPORTS
DEV: EA GAMES
PUBL: EA GAMES
PRICE: \$49.99
PLAYERS: 1-4 (ONLINE)
GENRE: RACING

GMR 9/10

BETTER THAN: NPS UNDERGROUND
COULD BE: TIBURON'S BEST TITLE
NEEDS: BIGGER ONLINE FIELDS



GMR ESSENTIAL SELECTION



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— G4TechTV

"A deep and twisted post-apocalyptic RPG with stunning visuals and a mature story -- something quite unlike what we've seen before."

— GameSpy

...one of the three surprising overall games of 2004." — IGN.com



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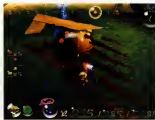
PlayStation 2



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→ Everybody knows about the white and purple pikmin, but Nintendo's hidden a third new pikmin type in the caverns, one that sadly never makes it out into the sunlight.



PIKMIN 2

IN-A-GADDA-DA-CUTE

EVERYONE | GC

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
DEVELOPER: NINTENDO
PRICE: \$49.99
RELEASE: AVAILABLE NOW
PLAYERS: 1-2
REGION: JAPAN

➔ **Pikmin 2**, perhaps the finest of all cute plant-whatsit management sims, returns the diminutive Captain Olimar to Earth. This time, his assistant Louie tags along, and the game's dynamic shifts dramatically from survival and escape to finding and collecting booty. In doing so, the game opens itself up while simultaneously losing a little of its majesty and a lot of its urgency.

New pikmin await here, in three distinct flavors. These pikmin are central to another new feature, underground caverns, and can only be collected there.

With the addition of the new pikmin, the caverns, and the ability to shift between Olimar and Louie with the

press of a button, it's clear the developers have expanded the franchise. Now, players are not limited to a strict 30-day time limit, but can explore at their leisure and are not bound by the clock when in caverns. Yet the changes are not all for the best. Cramped caverns show clever design but also highlight why the game works better in huge environments. Underground, players need to constantly fiddle with the adjustable camera to find a solid view. And while the game retains its penchant for both the gorgeous and weird (one bloated boss literally poops acidic minions), it tends to emphasize combat rather than puzzle solving, lessening the need for a second controllable character.

Character upgrades, including a useless superpunch for Olimar and Louie, highlight *Pikmin 2*'s greatest flaw: It relies too heavily on the collection of stuff. Neither character particularly needs a superpunch—the whole point is that they serve as the brains behind the pikmin's collective brawn—but it's still thrown in because here, collectible stuff is king. **B+**

—Greg Orlando

GMR FRESH **8/10**
BITTER THAN GOBLIN COMMANDER, UNLEASH THE HORDE
NOT AS GOOD AS PIKMIN
WAIT FOR IT: THE INEVITABLE SEQUEL

2ND OPINION

Removing the time limit is a good thing—it makes *Pikmin 2* more pleasurable instead of aggravating. Collecting Earth artifacts and reading their hilarious descriptions never gets tedious. And two-player games are incredibly fun and frenetic, and they bring competition and replayability to an already excellent game. **B+**
—Carrie Sinesherd

The City Group's 2008 TDR, which was published in February, lists the names of the 300 architects, engineers, interior designers, landscape architects, planners, and other professionals who have worked on the project. The list is organized by city and includes the names of the firms that have worked on the project. The list is organized by city and includes the names of the firms that have worked on the project.

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ON FROZEN POND

THE TWO REMAINING HOCKEY FRANCHISES FACE OFF

The two words that strike fear into the hearts of puck fans worldwide: *collective bargaining*. If things go the way they've been going, it's fully conceivable that the only way to follow a season of pro hockey this winter will be to play one yourself. You have only two options this year, but fortunately, there's a clear winner....

ESPN NHL 2K5 A GREAT DAY FOR HOCKEY

TEEN | PS2 [REVIEWED] | 73

With ESPN's NFL title getting so much attention in the off-season, it's hard to imagine the folks at Visual Concepts had much time to devote to hockey. After all, the sport is facing a possible strike/lockout/catastrophic event that might prevent the 2005 season from ever hitting the ice. Those factors make the realization of ESPN's *NHL 2K5* title, with its excellent upgrades, a minor miracle.

Franchise mode has always been a sore spot with this series, and ESPN's approach is somewhat similar to MVP's model, with minor league players and prospects that require monitoring. The concept is cool, but hockey's minor leagues don't carry the same romance and connection as baseball's farm system. That aside, getting information about the next hot prospect, putting him through a series of drills, and tweaking your minor league lines to get him more playing time is a fun enough diversion for the control freaks of the world.

Gameplay on the ice has been refined to the point where the game is easily the class of the genre. Smooth, realistic skating physics combine with this year's

new "intensity" hitting to nail the flow of the game. The goalies are not as predictable this year, and scoring feels more like an organic event, rather than an exercise in connecting the dots.

True icaniks will revel in the new dream mode and party mode. In dream mode, you'll face a series of 20 dream teams selected by various hockey personalities. Party mode is a series of games that test your on-ice proficiency in a certain area. Some minor props have been added to the arenas for these challenges, which are a nice break from the grind of season play.

At \$20, this is one biscuit you should definitely put in the basket. **B+**
—Dan Leahy

FIVE SEASONS
NEW VISUAL CONCEPTS
ALL SEPTENNIAL

PRICE: \$19.99
PLAYERS: 1-4
GENRE: U.S.A.

GMR 8¹⁰ BREAKAWAY

COULD BE SPORTS SLEEPER OF THE YEAR
CAN'T GET ENOUGH CUSTOMIZABLE ARENA MUSIC
BETTER THAN NHL 2005



→ *NHL 2K5's* hit stick is a much more civilized way of dealing out the punishment than *NHL 2005's* sophisticated "hitting everything that moves" engine. Use it too much, though, and it's the sin bin for you.



→ Three times every year, Visual Concepts and EA Sports go head-to-head in football, basketball, and hockey. Almost every time, the race is too close to call...but this year, there's a clear winner in the hockey showdown. *NHL 2005* seems like a step backward from previous years, and although it's still playable, the natural flow of the game is better represented in *ESPN NHL 2K5*. Plus, the latter is only \$20, so it shouldn't really be much of a decision.



NHL 2005 UNNECESSARY ROUGHNESS

EVERYONE | PS2 (REVIEWED) | GC | XB

→ In a year when the NHL needed it most, EA's version of puck dropped the ball. This was to be the year that EA's *NHL 2005* evened the score with its competitor, *ESPN NHL 2K5*. Instead, the company clanged it off the post.

NHL 2005's major flaw is the sheer amount of contact that takes place during a game. It's got more checks than a bank! More hits than the Top 40! We're talking hospitalizingly devastating mow downs. You can't hold the puck for more than a stride before a shoulder catches you square in the Jofa. While banging bodies is as much a part of modern hockey as it is part of late-night Cinemax, the result is a complete lack of offensive flow. Once you get the puck, you scream up the ice (mightily quickly, it should be mentioned), then shoot, then get smoked; then the other team screams down the ice (also mightily quickly), they shoot, get creamed, rinse, repeat.

Yes, hockey's fast. And maybe this high-energy, high-paced back and forth pucking around sounds great. And it is...for a while. But after, say, 10 or 12 games, you'll need a nap from being both worn out and bored.

Of course, all of the hitting means flaring tempers,

and that's where this game really shines. The fighting is superb. If you skate around looking for a scrap, you'll get one. The combatants will wrestle for position, and once one gets a hand loose, it's haymaker city. Hit hard enough and helmets, not just fists, will fly. Good times.

Problem is, fighting is this game's go-to, and that's trouble. *NHL 2005* has the pieces in place (like the sweet franchise mode), but it needs a Valium. There don't need to be 13 Bertuzzings a game. Maybe next year the steroids will wear off. Until then, better to cozy up with *ESPN NHL 2K5*. **C-**

—Todd Zuniga

EA SPORTS
NHL
SEPTEMBER

EA CANADA
OCTOBER

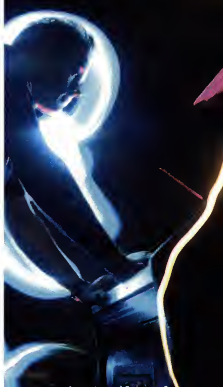
PLAYERS: 14
ONLINE: 14
GENRES: HOCKEY

MLA RITS
6¹⁰

BETTER THAN TOUCH UP KICKING
NOT AS GOOD AS ESPN NHL 2K5
WAIT FOR IT! NHL 2006

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DEAD OR ALIVE ULTIMATE

AUTOMATIC FOR THE PEOPLE

RATING PENDING | XB

PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: TEAM NINJA
PRICE: \$54.99
RELEASED: OCTOBER
PLAYERS: 1-2 (PICK-UP)
SPECIFICATIONS: JAPAN

➔ Although it's one of the most chronologically dysfunctional games to come out in recent years, *Dead or Alive Ultimate* scores the neat hat trick of 1) providing DOA fans with an unprecedented slice of fan service, 2) completing the entire series on Xbox, and 3) making an older game worth playing again.

The fan service arrives in the form of the previously unreleased Sega Saturn version of the original *Dead or Alive*. It is essentially a feature-for-feature perfect port offering the same game modes, unlockable costumes, and basic DOA control scheme as the Saturn version (released only in Japan). Naturally, the more powerful Xbox hardware has

cleaned up the rough transparencies and gritty textures of the original game. And, despite the fact that this disc's mere existence is cool enough, Team Ninja has enabled the original DOA to be played over Xbox Live. While most people will probably shoot directly over to the remake of DOA2: *Hardcore*, it's still a bold technical feature to add to what is essentially a novelty bonus.

However, the focus of *Ultimate*, naturally, is the brazen remake of Team Ninja's groundbreaking *Dead or Alive 2: Hardcore*. Famous for its multitiered levels, blistering tag-team action, and beautiful graphics, it'd be reasonable to think that the dev team wouldn't really be able to add much to what is already

an extremely polished game (let alone surpass *Dead or Alive 3*'s achievements). And yet that's exactly what they've done.

Built from the ground up using DOA: *Xtreme Beach Volleyball*'s graphics engine, Kasumi and company get foxy makeovers, meaning bigger stages, jaw-dropping weather and lighting effects, exceptionally interactive backgrounds, and almost twice as many stages as the original PS2 version. And, of course, a locker full of new, unlockable costumes. The result? A game that looks better than not only the PS2 version of DOA2, but DOA3 as well.

Of course, the game plays as well as DOA2 ever did, while adding and updating the formula to improve the



tweaks made to DOA3 [meaning the gameplay hasn't regressed to previous mechanics]. While not available in the story mode, extra characters Bayman and Tengu are playable in other modes, as is DOA3's half-Japanese, half-German brawler Hitomi. Sadly absent is DOAX's contribution to the roster, Lisa.

While lacking the sheer depth of either *Virtua Fighter* or *Soul Calibur*, DOA's fighting system offers the fastest 3D fighting around with a slick reversal system tuned for players of all abilities. Hardcore purists may scoff, but there's something to be said for a game playable by all, especially when it looks good. Adding a virtual audience via Xbox Live merely enhances the party atmosphere,

[BACK TOGETHER AGAIN. EHP? LET'S PLAY!] PARTY YOUR BODY

➔ While the prospect of finding a sole person on the Ethernet to compete against in an online fighting arena sounds kind of dry, take comfort in the rollicking party atmosphere you get when you drop six spectators into the mix. The games we played online suffered from virtually zero latency even though six additional fools were yapping away while the principal combatants kicked the crap out of each other in either single-character or tag-team mode. The dissing was rampant, but the mood was jovial as people took turns mopping the floor with each other. **1+**



➔ DOAU implements some beautiful new stages, like the beach stage (left) from DOAX and the Detroit Rock City-style area (above).

and the game is so smooth over Xbox Live that you'd never know you were playing on the Internet. DOAU's online features list is deep as well. You'll be surprised by how specifically you can tailor online matches.

Interactive backgrounds come to life as you slam your opponents into irritated wildlife, through wooden railings, down stairs, into fragile flagstones, against Chinese gongs, into ceilings, against snowmen, and through stained-glass windows. It creates a virtual playground that enhances the action.

Other bonuses include the previously hard-to-find Booster Pack for DOA3 [which unlocks extra costumes], a CG gallery, and the usual lineup of fighting-

game features. While DOAU lacks any sort of innovative A.I. mode (VF4) or quest mode (*Soul Calibur II*), the online play is a breakthrough among 3D fighting games. The overall score reflects this package's value as a dream come true for DOA fans and is a testament to its overall polish and quality. But subtract a point if you're not a diehard fan who longs to see something totally new. **1+**

—James Mielke

GMR 9/10
BETTER THAN TEKKEN 6
NOT AS GOOD AS VIRTUA FIGHTER 4: EVOLUTION
WAIT FOR ITS TEKKEN 5

2ND OPINION

For those who just don't have the time to peel away the layers of *Virtua Fighter 4* or *Soul Calibur II*, *Dead or Alive Ultimate* is an easily accessible goodness. Killing the notion that one online solution fits all, DOAU's custom tournament setup is tailor-made for 3D fighting, and it fits like a glove. **1+**

—Andrew Pister

GUILTY GEAR X2 #RELOAD

HEAVEN OR HELL? LET'S ROCK ONLINE

TEEN | XB

Remember when 2D fighters were a dime a dozen? These days, it's survival of the fittest. Video Darwinism's most evolved series is *Guilty Gear*. While the PS2 is getting the next game in the series later this year, Xbox now has something that may end up being more compelling in the long run—an online edition.

#Reload is essentially the same game that hit the PS2 over a year ago, with a number of subtle changes and a new character. It's not exactly cutting edge. What it is, though, is incredibly solid fun. The developers' creativity—within the carefully prescribed boundaries of the 2D fighter genre, of course—is refreshing.

The game's controls are simply spot on, and the slate of characters is large enough to encompass anyone's taste. People make light of the game's whacked-out heavy-metal anime aesthetic, but *GMR* prefers living in a world where every game isn't *Shadow Ops: Red Mercury*. *#Reload* is the

perfect antidote to Xbox's ever-increasing morass of me-too racers and first-person shooters.

And thanks to *#Reload*'s solid Xbox Live support, it's a very welcome addition to the library. If you can't convince a friend to come over and throw down, the gameplay on Live is enough to make up for it. Watch out for lag, though—long-distance matches can get too choppy to be any fun. But *#Reload* is too enjoyable both on- and offline to ignore, and its budget pricing makes it a must-buy for even the casually curious. **A-**

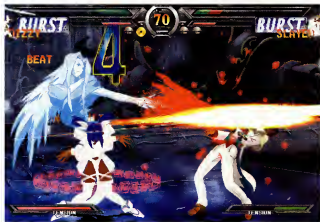
Christian Nutt

FOR PS2
BOX #RELOAD
BOX SEPTEMBER

PRICE: \$39.99
PLAYERS: 1-2 (ONLINE)
GENRE: JAPAN

GMR 8/10

BETTER THAN: CAPCOM VS. SNK 2
ALSO BETTER THAN: SVC CHAOS
WAIT FOR IT: STREET FIGHTER ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION



DYNASTY WARRIORS 4: EMPIRES

THAT'S WHAT FRIENDS ARE FOR

TEEN | PS2

→ Koel knows a good thing when it has it, hence the decision to release yet another expansion disc for *Dynasty Warriors 4*. This time, the hack-n-slash action gets some strategic elements added to the mix.

Once again, you control one of many key figures from China's celebrated past, and the goal is more or less the same: taking land and ruling it. In the main mode, you start with just one officer and one section of land. You can expand your territory either through straightforward force or by aligning with other rulers. Each faction has its own agendas and associated problems, and by performing key favors, which can take the form of swapping or even combining resources, you will not only make allies, but also empower your own forces, which will greatly aid in the tackling of fiercer foes.

This is essentially a variant of the same strategic gameplay we've seen

for years in other Koel titles such as *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. But for those who wanted to enjoy the simulation aspects but were scared off by the daunting complexity, Koel finally has something for them to sink their teeth into: a thinking person's game with just enough button-mashing to keep things snappy.

As for everything else, it's what anyone who's remotely familiar with the series has come to expect. Not much has changed in regard to visuals, audio, or controls—there's just much more of the same.

It's easy for skeptics to dismiss this latest add-on as just another shameless attempt to cash in on the series, and even Koel fans have to be confused at this point with all the *Dynasty* variants out there, but Koel has at last created a compelling hybrid of gameplay that actually works. **A-**

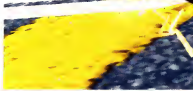
Matthew Hawkins

FOR PS2
BOX EMPIRE FORCE
BOX SEPTEMBER

PRICE: \$29.99
PLAYERS: 1-2
GENRE: JAPAN

GMR 8/10

EASIER THAN: ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS
BETTER THAN: DYNASTY WARRIORS 4: EXTREME LEGENDS
WAIT FOR IT: THE INEVITABLE DYNASTY WARRIORS 5



→ There are two significant additions to the Burnout series introduced in Takedown. The first is that you now control how much boost to use and when (previous versions made you use it all at once). The second is the Aftertouch Takedown: whenever you crash, holding the boost button enables a slow-motion view, and you can control the momentum of your wreck and steer it into competitors.

BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN

SYMPHONY OF DESTRUCTION

TEEN | PS2 [REVIEWED] | XB

Arguments concerning the ability of videogames to have a physical and mental effect on their users should steer away from the likes of *Manhunt* and *GTA* and consider instead why a few hours of *Burnout 3: Takedown* is enough to spike blood pressure, irritability, and split-second reaction time.

The name of the game in *Takedown* is to actively take out your opponents before they get a chance to reciprocate. This is the key improvement to *Burnout 3*, and the pure aggression that it promotes—driver A.I. will remember that you attacked, and revenge is encouraged and rewarded—ensures that races are more than simple point A to point B affairs. There's plenty of variety

in how you can race: simple circuits, grand prix, one-on-one face-offs, and destruction-oriented road ragers are distributed evenly throughout the game's world tour structure, which opens up new areas of play and hands out unlockable rewards at a good pace.

But, of course, *Burnout 3* would not be *Burnout* without the glorious crash mode, something that could be easily justified as a standalone product. The 100 crash junctions serve as, believe it or not, a relaxing break from stressful racing and are constructed almost as levels in a puzzle game, with only a few ways of racking up the highest damage. The ability to play this mode with two players online either competitively or

cooperatively further sweetens the deal.

Burnout 3 is a superlative racer in both appearance and design. The only missteps are a super class of cars that are almost too fast for the courses, an abundance of loading screens, and a mostly terrible soundtrack—the latter two problems solved by the Xbox version. Amid tough competition, *Takedown* is currently the best racer of 2004. **A-**

—Andrew Plister

GMR 9/10

BETTER THAN DESTRUCTION DERBY ONLINE
ON PAR WITH F-ZERO GX
WAIT FOR IT: OUTRUN 2

2ND OPINION

Burnout 3 is my racing-game fantasy come true. The incredible sense of speed alone would be enough for me to say this, but the piece de resistance is the awesome crashes. Talk about your adrenaline-pumping action—I need another pump! *Burnout 3* already has my vote for arcade racer of the year. **A-**

—Tom Byron

PUBLISHER: ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEVELOPER: GEMSTONE
PRICE: \$49.99
RELEASE: AVAILABLE NOW
PLAYERS: 1-4 (ONLINE)
OS: PC, XBOX

SPY FICTION

JAMES BOND WITHOUT THE COOL

MATURE | P52

Stealth games like *Splinter Cell* take the gameplay mechanics of *Metal Gear Solid* and run in a completely new direction. Stealth games like *Spy Fiction* try desperately to emulate their mentor but fail and barely manage to separate themselves from the very game they aspire to be.

There are aspects of *Spy Fiction* that stealth aficionados will definitely want to check out—specifically, the usable camouflage suit and a 3D camera that transforms your entire outfit into that of any character's in the game are both clever and useful.

The latter is the game's main draw and is central to completing every mission successfully. Unfortunately, its implementation is dodgy. If you act "strange" around enemies, they'll inspect you. You can be inspected only a certain number of times before being caught, and certain outfits allow more slip-ups than others. Acting "strange," however, usually means accidentally bumping into NPCs due to the sloppy analog controls. There are even several places where the game seems to forget you have a costume on and simply moving causes an enemy shakedown.

Gamers are sure to have a blast with the camera, seeing as how it loves odd angles and the right analog stick only pans the camera up, down, left, and right. This would be OK if the camera consistently followed your

character from its third-person perspective, but that doesn't happen too often. The game helps compensate for this difficulty with auto-aiming from the third person, but really, that shouldn't be necessary.

Being that you're a spy, you have access to lots of gadgets. Unfortunately, *Spy Fiction* makes sure there's no incentive for using any of them. For example, you have spider grips for crawling on the ceiling, but outside of the hallway they're introduced in, there's no practical use for them in the game—ever. There are other cool toys available, but they won't necessarily make the missions any easier. If anything, their uselessness only fuels frustration.

Even die-hard fans of the genre will find it difficult to show any enthusiasm for *Spy Fiction*. Though it features a few original ideas, its execution is lackluster and uninspired compared to its competition. Better leave it to the big boys, Sammy. **D-**
—Patrick Klepek

PS2 SAMMY STUNGE
BOX ACCESS GAMES
PC AVAILABLE NOW

PRICE \$49.95
PLAYERS 1
ORIGIN USA

GMR 4¹⁰

BETTER THAN MISSION IMPOSSIBLE—OPERATION SURINA
NOT AS GOOD AS: SPLINTER CELL/MS
WAIT FOR IT: SPLINTER CELL 2



PHANTOM BRAVE

SHE'S GOT IT WHERE IT COUNTS

TEEN | P52

Phantom Brave, Nippon Ichi's third game in as many years, completes the Japanese developer's quirky trinity of turn-based strategy-RPGs. Like its spiritual predecessors *Disgaea* and *La Pucelle*, *Phantom Brave* rocks an old-school 2D look while continuing to inch the genre forward evermore. The game follows the misadventures of Marona, an orphan with the nifty ability to summon and communicate with phantoms.

Typical of a strategy-RPG, *Phantom Brave*'s narrative is pervasive throughout the game, but characterization takes the inevitable backseat to number crunching and statistics. If the accusation is that the game is nothing more than a glorified math engine in anime dress, *Phantom Brave* is certainly guilty as charged. But gamers who are willing to look beyond its lack of plot cohesion will find one of the deepest turn-based combat systems ever digitized. The game's innovations come twofold: the abolition of grid-based movement and the (more significant) necessity of "confining" characters to items on the map.

Lossing the grid movement system may sound like a major revamp to the genre, but in retrospect, there's actually little benefit to *Phantom Brave*'s free-movement system. Without a grid to separate characters into their own space, what you end up with is user-interface chaos. During combat, melee fighters and monsters amass into a pixelated dog pile, often making it difficult to select the character you're trying to attack and/or heal.

The true crux of *Phantom Brave*'s battle system, however, lies in confining your various party members to items such as trees, rocks, mushrooms, and weapons. In doing so, you not only summon characters from your roster to do your violent bidding, but you also alter their characteristics depending on the item they're bound to. Since every map has a limited number of items strewn about, you're constantly faced with prioritizing battles as if they were logic puzzles waiting to be solved. In fact, the confine system—for better or worse—defines *Phantom Brave*; it's unique, challenging, and dictates the way battles unfold.

Like other Nippon Ichi RPGs, *Phantom Brave* is ambitiously niched and infinitely flexible, giving players a battle system of unparalleled depth that's as innovative as it is daunting—even for crusty veterans of the genre. Sure, you can play without giving much thought to the limitless exploitable possibilities in character customization and combat, but you'll also never quite shake the feeling that you're not playing the game "quite right." **B+**
—Che Chou

PS2 NIPPON ICHI
BOX NIPPON ICHI
PC AVAILABLE NOW

PRICE \$49.95
PLAYERS 1
ORIGIN JAPAN

GMR 8¹⁰

DEEPER THAN DISGAEA
MORE FUN THAN: A TRIGONOMETRY TEST
WAIT FOR IT: MAKAI WARS (PS2)

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SLY2: BAND OF THIEVES
 PS2

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IN STORES NOVEMBER 16, 2004

DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE



→ The clash between the lush, beautiful environments of Sudeki and its, grotesque character design seems to suggest that the art teams were not always on the same page. What exactly is that armor on the ogre's shoulder, and why does it have to be so big? These questions must be asked!



SUDEKI

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURER

MATURE | XB

PUBLISHER: MICROSOFT
DEVELOPER: CLIMAX STUDIOS
PRICE: \$49.99
RELEASE: AVAILABLE NOW
PLAYERS: 1
OS: XBOX

➔ There haven't been many RPGs on Xbox, but their styles have been wildly different. On the one hand, there's *Midway's Gauntlet: Dark Legacy* and on the other, there's *BioWare's Knights of the Old Republic*. Microsoft's *Sudeki* lands squarely in the middle. It's an RPG with both real-time melee combat and first-person shooting.

Sudeki tells the tale of a hunky swordsmen, a nerdy scientist, a thong-wearing catwoman, and a spandex-clad sorceress who are thrown together to gather crystals for a magical device. Naturally, the reigning aristocracy plans to use the device for evil, and soon the quartet is thrust into an adventure that leads them into another world. The

game plays out like an RPG version of *Shrek 2*, with four characters who can be selected on the fly. Because two characters use melee weapons and two use projectile weapons, gameplay varies dramatically: Players slash, juggle, and block from an isometric view or open fire when the game switches to first-person mode. Staple RPG spells like Heal, Poison, Haste, and Regenerate add to the frenetic battles, and each character has destructive techniques.

Sudeki is a mixed bag: The graphics are lush and immersive, but the framerate occasionally stutters during battle. The game ends just when the story starts to get interesting, and hardcore RPG fans should be able to

beat it over a single weekend of dedicated play. The choice to include real-time combat in a fleshed-out RPG is the only aspect of *Sudeki* that's truly innovative, but it's still not enough to set it apart. With games like *Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles* creating new genres, it's a wonder and a shame that Climax didn't include a multiplayer mode. But *Sudeki* is worthy of a rental. **C-**

—Doug Trueman

GMR 6/10

BETTER THAN GAUNTLET: DARK LEGACY
NOT AS GOOD AS: BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE
TRADE IT IN FOR: FABLE

2ND OPINION

Sudeki has its heart in the right place. Unfortunately, your sword won't be its best mojo when a combat-heavy action RPG has stiff, unresponsive controls. If you want a Western RPG, only Fable. If you want a Japanese RPG, just buy a PS2. **C-** Christian Nutt



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THE GUY GAME

SOPHOMORIC SLUMP

MATURE | XB (REVIEWED) | PS2

➔ In the formative teenage years, a young man learns that an attractive female who wears no clothing is undeniably a good thing. It is hoped that eventually, this young man also develops a sense of class, appreciation, and restraint in matters involving the opposite sex. These hopes are dashed by *The Guy Game*, a delicate blend of *You Don't Know Jack*, *Girls Gone Wild*, and repeatedly smashing your head against a concrete wall.

The list of people that *The Guy Game* either offends, insults, or shames is quite long: politicians, educators, the clergy, parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, co-workers, feminist organizations, gay/lesbian organizations, aspiring comedians, girl gamers, the makers of *Trivial Pursuit*, and perhaps most tragically, any deserving developer whose game—that's actually a game—sold fewer than 100,000 copies.

Strong is the temptation to dismiss *The Guy Game* as, well, merely a harmless game "for guys." The problem

is that it gleefully beats the horse that *Girls Gone Wild* and an armada of "lad mags" shot dead in the late 1990s, and it drills in even further the stereotype that this is how young men should behave—that is to say, badly. There's absolutely nothing wrong with enjoying a cold beer, hanging out with friends, and appreciating the female form, but to do so with such joyful abandonment of class ultimately does more harm than good. As a trivia contest, *The Guy Game* is merely average. As social commentary, we weep for the future. ☹

—Andrew Pfister

FOR	BARBERS	PRICE	\$29.99
TOP	TOP RIGHT STRIPS	PLAYERS	1-4
RE	AVAILABLE NOW	OS/ISA	PS2

GMR 3/10

THAT'S SOMEBODY'S DAUGHTER
PRICER THAN A SIX-PACK AND THE INTERNET
DON'T WAIT FOR IT: A GAMECUBE PORT



FOR	GRANDALLA TIMES	PRICE	\$29.99
WIT	ONE	PLAYERS	1-4
WIT	SEPTEMBER	OS/ISA	NA/JP

GMR 5/10

ON PUR WITH VETERANS
NOT AS GOOD AS B. TILFELD VETERAN
WANT FOR IT: CONFLICT VIETNAM

SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67

HALF METAL JACKET

MATURE | PS2

➔ Now that World War II games are thoroughly "been there, done that," publishers are looking for other wars to explore and exploit. Whereas WWII is generally regarded as a conflict to be proud of, the debate over whether or not the Vietnam War was as worthwhile an enterprise will rage on for years to come. The reasons for fighting it were not always clear, and some decisions made at the top didn't always make sense. At times, playing *ShellShock: Nam '67* feels the same way.

The game does its best to thrust players into the role of a hapless Army grunt in the midst of a confusing and gruesome conflict. Every mission takes you deeper into the enemy's home turf, and the game never lets you forget where you are. One minute you're walking along a serene jungle clearing, the next, bullets are screaming in from all sides. This is where *ShellShock* both excels and fails. You'll be on edge

after the first instances of enemy ambushes, but near the end of the game, that effect will wear off, and the initial tension will eventually turn into boredom and frustration with each new encounter.

Controls are fairly standard for a third-person shooter. You can run, shoot, and duck (this you'll be doing often). As for looks, the war wasn't pretty, and neither is the game. While serviceable, the graphics are just bland. But the real problem is the character animation, which ranges from awkward to comical.

ShellShock's brutal honesty in its depiction of the conflict includes presenting female villagers as optional targets and creating a cohort who constantly uses blue language. But beneath it all, it's still an average shooter at best. You haven't seen such a war before, but you will, and it will certainly look better. And more than likely, it will play better as well. ☹

—Matthew Hawkins

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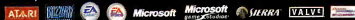
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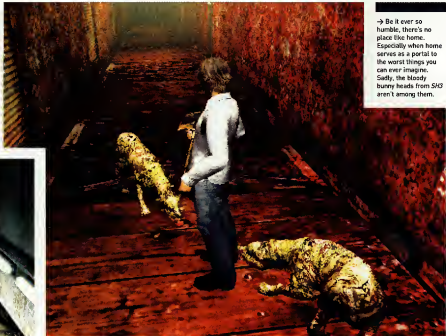


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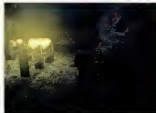


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→ Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home. Especially when home serves as a portal to the worst things you can ever imagine. Sadly, the bloody bunny heads from SHG aren't among them.



SILENT HILL 4: THE ROOM

1 BR. 1 BATH. PARKING. NO PETS. HORRIBLE VIEWS

MATURE | PS2 [REVIEWED] | XB

PUBLISHER: KONAMI
DEVELOPER: KONAMI CE TOKYO
PRICE: \$49.99
RELEASE: SEPTEMBER
PLAYERS: 1
ORIGIN: JAPAN

➔ The minds behind today's most popular survival-horror franchises have always seemed to take a "if it scared 'em once, it'll work again!" approach to sequels. *Resident Evil* titles come standard with lame key puzzles, lumbering zombies, obnoxious crows, and a ubiquitous escape-the-facility-before-it-blows finale. Similarly, *Silent Hill* games offer fog-shrouded visuals, conflicted heroes interloping between realities, creepy enemies in need of a crowbar beatdown, and a ubiquitous trip to a blood-soaked hospital. Of course, these repetitive formulas can only work for so long...and just as *Resident Evil 4* readies a bevy of changes, *Silent Hill 4: The*

Room receives a serious remodeling.

At the game's outset, you're blindsided by what's new in this installment: You're completely trapped in your apartment, and you explore it from a first-person perspective. Using this view to navigate through the meager domicile conveys the isolation and claustrophobia in an amazingly effective way. Many of the scary aspects of your room are extremely subtle, and you probably won't even see all of them in a single playthrough...but this new view clearly shows the future direction the series should be headed in.

Trouble is, most of the game doesn't take place in your room. Nope, Henry ends up crawling through a magic hole

in his bathroom that leads to various locations. The perspective in these levels is standard behind-the-dude third person, and the gameplay offers a familiar blend of monster thwacking and light puzzles. The stellar visuals and spot-on sound design keep these from being too terribly dull, but clumsy combat and woeful repetition will try your patience. **B-**

—Shane Bettenhausen

GMR

BETTER THAN THE SUFFERING
NOT AS GOOD AS SILENT HILL 2
WAIT FOR IT: RESIDENT EVIL 4

FOR MORE
7/10

2ND OPINION

The combat's still on the clumsy side, and the dusty hallways and inhuman horrors aren't as spooky if you survived previous adventures in the town of Silent Hill, but the claustrophobic new stuck-in-your-room silent will scare you otherwise. **B-**

—Shaun Elliott
Associate editor
EGM

Young Man, Life is No Game!



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SOLDIERS: HEROES OF WORLD WAR II

GOOD GOD. Y'ALL

MATURE | PC

Just for a second, let's pretend that *Commandos 3: Destination Berlin* never happened. In fact, after playing *Soldiers: Heroes of World War II*, we're going to lobby that Eidos dub this game the spiritual successor to the *Commandos* series, because quite frankly, this is what a strategy war game is supposed to be like: brilliant graphics, incredibly detailed environments, smart controls, and 30 sinister standalone missions.

Like in the aforementioned *Commandos*, you start off each of the campaigns—British, German, Russian, and American—in control of a small force. You'll find more squadmates to command as you progress through each campaign, and you'll use them to commandeer vehicles, sneak around behind enemy lines, and so on. It's when you start creeping around the game maps that things start to get interesting. You can mess with everything that you see in the game world. Aim artillery, hide in the woods and set up an ambush, mount tanks, and destroy buildings—it's all up to you.

Even on a medium-level machine, you'll instantly notice a smooth 3D engine, fantastically realistic animation, and a fine level of detail in the game world. Seriously, a lot of work has gone into this game and it shows.

Now here's where things get a little sticky. The controls, while good, can backfire at times. Are you surrounded? Hit the Toggle key and you can directly control a single character or unit. Move

that unit with the keyboard and aim with the mouse. This simple addition really changes up the gameplay on stealth missions with only one or two characters to worry about, but it adds another layer of complexity on missions in which you need to control a larger force and directly control a single unit at the same time. Combine this with the ungodly degree of difficulty of the missions and you've got one hell of an uphill battle ahead of you. After basic training, you're thrown off the deep end against staggering odds. But it's definitely worth the effort and extra cost in broken keyboards. Good luck, soldier—you'll need it. **D**

—Darren Gladstone



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BEST BUY PLAYERS 1-2 ONLINE
AVAILABLE NOW 30 DAYS UNKNOWN

GMR 8¹⁰

THINK A REAL-TIME VERSION OF SILENT STORM
SPIRITUAL SUCCESSOR TO THE GOOD
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WAIT FOR IT: SILENT STORM: THE SENTINELS

GALLEON

CONFOUNDING FACTOR

TEEN | XB

➔ "Go forth and play," proclaims *Galleon*. As virtual sandboxes go, it sprawls in three dimensions, with sunken ships in azure pools, huge brown vertical walls, pits and planks, caverns and calamity galore. Its hero, Captain Rhama, tackles the terrain with superhuman prowess, leaping great distances, scaling rock faces with only his bare hands, dashing and swimming with such quickness it defies the limitations of flesh and bone. The man, in fact, is very nearly Superman without the cape and curl, set in a world that's tailor-made for a hero beyond the pale.

Yet the combination of the superhuman hero and the fantastical world plays out like a well-written comedy routine that's badly timed and horribly delivered. "Go forth and play," proclaims *Galleon*, and good luck when you find out the giant sandbox has no map. At times, *Galleon* requests that players climb and weave their way up, up, up for 25 or 30 minutes, hunt for tools along the way, climb precariously, push this and pull that so as to align a huge ship on a platform, and then, once they have ascended to what seems to be the top of the world, it demands they race downward across the ship to some ill-defined location in three minutes or less. With a standard camera set, this would be a feat in itself. With *Galleon*'s variation-on-a-

theme camera, where the view is determined by Rhama's position or a clumsy first-person view, it's a sermon on frustration.

Combat adds nothing to *Galleon*'s intrigue; tussles against bosses follow the same simple pattern: jump on body, climb on head, stab, repeat. And as neat as the idea of an agile hero who can power his way through the seas and across rough-hewn stone is, the wickedly deviled camera damns such segments. The camera jerks and spasms epileptically here, trying to adjust to Rhama's ever-changing alignment.

A long time in the making, *Galleon* now seems more quaint than anything else. The game holds some small thrills in the hero's cocky swagger and its wonderfully sensitive control system that lets Rhama can proceed cautiously without fear of falling off ledges, but it's been eclipsed—and, as such, it arrives on Xbox as both a has-been and simultaneously a never-ran. **D+**

—Greg Orlando

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IF LOOKS COULD KILL: A LOOK BACK AT TECMO'S HIGHLY STYLIZED DEAD OR ALIVE SERIES

DEAD OR ALIVE
THE START OF OUR OBSESSION

PS1 | MARCH 1998

➔ The first third-party arcade game to utilize Sega's powerful Model-2 arcade board, *Dead or Alive*'s origins as an unexpectedly competent take on the *Virtua Fighter* series effectively laid the groundwork for future iterations and established Tecmo's fighting game as the premier T&A title of its time.

With the North American market for the Sega Saturn pushing up daisies by the time 1998 rolled around (the Saturn version would remain MIA until *DOA: Ultimate*), it was up to the surgically enhanced (pun intended) PlayStation version of *Dead or Alive* to make the series' presence felt on consoles.

Unlike the detailed, texture-heavy graphics of the Saturn version, *DOA* for PlayStation went for a smoother-looking, light-sourced approach that looked significantly different than previous versions of the game. Of course, the rapid-fire, ultraresponsive fighting-game mechanics (complete with the then-innovative reversal system) remained intact, giving gamers a legitimate alternative to popular



games like *Tekken 2*. The PS1 version also introduced Ayane as a playable character. Unlike most of its peers (*Toshinden* anyone?), *DOA* still holds up to the passage of time. ◀

—James Mielke

NOW... In light of recent advancements in the genre, a rather bare-bones set.

BASIC
7

THEN... Good looking and fun to play, *Dead or Alive* makes an impressive debut.

SURPRISE
8

DEAD OR ALIVE 2:
HARDCORE

"SECOND FLOOR, PLEASE"

PS2 | OCTOBER 2000

➔ When *Dead or Alive 2*, running on Sega's NAOMI hardware, made its debut at a Japanese arcade show, witnesses to the event refused to believe the game was running on a single version of the scalable, stackable technology.

The eventual arcade-perfect port of *DOA2* to the Dreamcast would ultimately disprove those naysayers, but who could blame them for their skepticism? The levels are huge. While much of the series' fame rests on the ample assets displayed by the game's female protagonists, not enough credit is given to the innovations *DOA* has brought to the genre. *DOA2* and, more specifically, *DOA2: Hardcore* introduced the first-ever true multitiered backgrounds in a 3D fighting game. This is no small accomplishment. Sure, *Virtua Fighter 3* has undulations in its levels, but it has nothing like the sky-scraping, stained-

glass-window-breaking, three-story drops of *DOA2*. *Tekken 4* has since tried to implement interactive backgrounds (badly), while *Virtua Fighter 4* and *Soul Calibur II* didn't even try. *Hardcore* also added new characters like the goldlocked Helena and Bayman-clone Leon, but the game's other notable achievement was the implementation of a lightning-fast 2-on-2 tag-team battle mode that puts *Tekken Tag Tournament*'s efforts to shame. ◀ —James Mielke



NOW... Still a solid, impressive fighter, but it's overshadowed by recent advancements in the genre.

VARIANT
8

THEN... Incredible at the time, *DOA2* did things the "big boys" hadn't even dreamed of.

VICIOUS
9

DEAD OR ALIVE 3

BELLE OF THE BALL

XBOX | NOVEMBER 2001

➔ The other major launch title for Xbox (along with *Halo*), *Dead or Alive 3* marked Team Ninja's move away from the technically inferior capabilities of the PlayStation 2 in favor of developing games exclusively for Microsoft's muscular new hardware. A visual showcase for what the Xbox is capable of (even more so than *Halo*), *Dead or Alive 3* is, even three years after its release, a graphical benchmark in 3D fighting games. But just how much did it improve on *DOA2*?

In hindsight, not as much, perhaps, as it should have. Despite adding new characters (Christie and Hitomi), the formula remained largely unchanged. Huge, multilayered stages were the backdrops against which the robust cast of characters would cavort, kicking each other off steep mountainsides, through glass fixtures, and into dragon-filled hidden sanctums, the glorious likes of which the competition could only imagine. The reversal system was finessed, too. Instead of merely pressing the Counter button to reverse an opponent's attacks, players needed to anticipate the altitude from which the attacks would originate (i.e., high, medium, or low). This made *DDA3* a more strategic fighter for a more

demanding audience. Naturally, the graphics were the showstopper, with more beautifully rendered characters and detailed, interactive, lifelike backgrounds than ever before. Of course, all the features established by *DOA2* (the UPS system, 2-on-2 tag-team battles, etc.) found their way back into the features list, meaning that this game is essentially a supersized, extrapolated update of *DOA2*. The only real drawbacks to *DOA3* are its lame single-player A.I. (whopping the CPU is painfully easy since only each character's chief rival offers any resistance) and what is possibly the cheapest, most irritating, most artificially difficult boss fight in fighting-game history. Armed with long-range attacks, an inconvenient camera perspective, sight-obscuring debris, and a personal Danger Zone attack, *DDA3*'s Omega is one of the most ill-conceived final bouts ever designed.

For fans, though, *DDA3* was the apex of the series up to this point. For something that's three years old now, the game holds up well, even in light of recent strides made by the likes of *Virtua Fighter 4*, and is worth inclusion in any gamer's library. **C+**
—James Mielke



NOW... Virtua Fighter 4 has since blazed new gameplay trails, but *DOA3* is still the best-looking fighter this side of *DOA: Ultimate*.

THEN... More of the same, really, but who could argue with the fast action and mind-bending graphics? Not many, it seems.

SKIN DEEP
8

PICTURESQUE
9

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MORE



TIPS. CODES. ONLINE. AND MORE

THIS MONTH IN MORE

DOOM 3 125

Cheats, keypad combos, level skips, and more

A.I. 128

Sick of losing? A.I. can help. We won't tell anyone

CONNECT 130

Ninja Gaiden Hurricane Pack, plus a Vana'diel wedding

HIGH SCORE 134

Geezer has the month off. Here's another freak to gawk at



DOOM 3

SECRETS: KEYPAD COMBINATIONS. BINDING KEYS. AND MORE

Besides laying waste to the incredible and terrifying monsters in *Doom 3*, you've got to figure out how to unlock a bunch of cabinets. But don't waste those brain cells—we've listed every keypad combo, as well as information on what you get for entering the correct codes. We've also thrown in some handy cheats and other essential info that will ensure that you will rule *Doom 3*. You're welcome.



The following tips were excerpted from Prima Games' Official Strategy Guide to *Doom 3*. The full guide is on sale now; check www.primagames.com for availability.

Official Strategy Guide to *Doom 3*. The full guide is on sale now; check www.primagames.com for availability.

STORAGE CABINETS

There are 30 storage cabinets to find and open in *Doom 3*. Each contains valuable items and weapons that might mean the difference between life and death, so open every one you come across.

STORAGE CABINET COMBINATIONS

Cabinet #	Level	Area	Combination	Location of Code	Contents
001	Mars City	Maintenance	396	Adam Berneche's PDA	Bullets
003	Recycling 2	Monorail access	483	Nick Sadoway's PDA	Grenades, plasma cell, security armor, clips
009	Alpha Labs 1	EPD lab	752	Kyle Berger's PDA	Large medkits, security armor, grenades, clip
013	Administration	Alpha labs hallway	586	Alan Donweiler's PDA	Grenades, shells, clip, security armor
017	Mars City	Infirmery	347	Dr. Mark Caseon's PDA	Shells, clip, security armor, large medkit
023	Mars City Underground	Energy stabilization unit	531	Grant Baston's PDA	Armor shards, shells, large medkit
038	Alpha Labs 2	MFS compressor	409	Andrew Chin's PDA	Security armor, clip, grenades
039	Alpha Labs 2	Coolant control junction	102	Walter Connors' PDA	Security armor, clips
047	Alpha Labs 3	Hazardous materials lift	123	Mark Lamia's PDA	Clips, grenades
048	Alpha Labs 3	Coolant monitoring	123	Mark Lamia's PDA	Plasma cell, ammo belt, large medkit
049	Alpha Labs 3	EFR staging room 1B	123	Mark Lamia's PDA	Armor shards
054	Communications	Security office	246	Ben Wolfe's PDA	Grenades, security armor
054	Monorail	Site 2 boarding platform	142	Charles Hollies' PDA	Security armor, rockets, grenades
063	EnPro Plant	Power core access	972	Theresa Chasar's PDA	Plasma gun, plasma cell, small medkit
064	Alpha Labs 4	EFR master valve	651	Henry Nelson's PDA	Armor shards, clip, plasma cell
078	Monorail	Delta security checkpoint	364	Karl Cullen's PDA	Large medkits, clips, grenades
079	Monorail	Delta security checkpoint	364	Karl Cullen's PDA	Large medkits, clips, grenades
103	Delta Labs Level 2B	Maintenance corridor	259	Francis Erickson's PDA	Plasma cells, shells, large medkit
104	Delta Labs Level 4	Delta 4 security	579	Jack Gilbert's PDA	Rockets, security armor, ammo belt
112	Delta 2A	Records office	538	Frank Cinder's PDA	Armor shards, cells, shotgun
114	Delta 2A	Operations server room	715	Note stuck to side of cabinet	Backpack, security armor, clip
116	Delta 2A	Delta security	972	Laptop in Delta Security	Large medkit, security armor, plasma gun, BFG cell
116	Delta 2B	Specimen research lab	624	Dr. Michaels tells you	Shells, bullets, plasma cell
117	Delta 2B	Specimen research lab	624	Dr. Michaels tells you	Security armor, BFG cell, grenades
213	Delta 2B	Stasis transfer control	371	Jacob Stemmon's PDA	Shells, clip, plasma cells
210	Delta 1	Storage room 21-D	298	Robert Price's PDA	Security armor, rockets, large medkit, grenades
317	Delta 4	Terminal office storage	841	Frank Cerano's PDA	Security armor, large medkits, clips, rockets, bullets
386	Delta 3	T1 access	836	Han Lee's PDA	Clip, large medkits, ammo belt, bullets
387	Delta 3	T1 access	836	Han Lee's PDA	Clip, rocket, grenades, large medkit, security armor
452	CPU Complex	Entrance checkpoint	571	Bruce Jackson's PDA	Rocket launcher, rockets, grenades
666	Delta 2B	Analysis control	372	Note stuck to front of cabinet	Imp, security armor
669	CPU Complex	Lab A upper floors	468	Charlie Haskell's PDA	Grenades, plasma cells, security armor

MARTIAN BUDDY CABINETS

Two special storage cabinets in Mars Base were delivered by Martian Buddy. They share the same code (0508), which you can find only by going to www.martianbuddy.com—or by reading this guide!

MARTIAN BUDDY CABINETS

Level	Area	Combination	Contents
Administration	North hallway	0508	Chaingun, ammo belt, security armor
Delta 2B	Secure storage	0508	BFG, security armor



WEAPONS ROOM

➔ Finally, don't miss the two weapons rooms in Mars Base. Open them with the combinations listed below to collect a staggering array of weapons, ammo, and items.

WEAPONS ROOM COMBINATIONS

Level	Area	Combination	Location of Code	Contents
Mars City 2	Marine command	584	Billi Tyson's PDA	Large medkit, shotguns, machine guns, clips, shells, security armor
EnPro	Maintenance 3	734	Steve Hammer's PDA	Plasma cells, armor shards, small medkits, large medkit, plasma gun, security armor

COMMAND CONSOLE

➔ Press Ctrl+Alt+Tilde to bring up the command console window in single-player mode. From the console, you can enter a variety of cheats and commands that dramatically change your *Doom 3* experience. Press Ctrl+Alt+Tilde again to hide the console.

NOTE: Bringing up the console does not pause the action in single-player mode.

CONSOLE COMMANDS

Command	Effect
god	Invincibility
give all	Gives you all weapons with full ammo, and full health and armor
noclip	Allows you to move through physical objects like a ghost

LEVEL SKIP

➔ Enter the command `devmap game/imap name/` at the console to instantly skip to that level.

LEVEL CONSOLE NAMES

Console Command	Level
marscity1.map	Mars City 2
admin.map	Administration
alpha1.map	Alpha Labs Sector 1
alpha2.map	Alpha Labs Sector 2
alpha3.map	Alpha Labs Sector 3
alpha4.map	Alpha Labs Sector 4
enpro.map	EnPro Plant
commout.map	Communications Transfer
communications.map	Communications
recycling1.map	Monorail Skybridge
recycling2.map	Recycling Sector 2
monorail.map	Monorail
delta1.map	Delta Labs Level 1
delta2a.map	Delta Labs Level 2A
delta2b.map	Delta Labs Level 2B
delta3.map	Delta Labs Level 3
delta4.map	Delta Labs Level 4
hell.map	Hell
delta5.map	Delta Complex
cpu1.map	CPU Complex
cpuboss.map	Central Processing
site3.map	Site 3
caverns1.map	Caverns—Area 1
caverns2.map	Caverns—Area 2
hellhole.map	Primary Excavation

TIP:

Entering a partial command at the console and pressing Tab allows you to cycle through all of the potential commands for the partial command you've typed in. For instance, typing `devmap game/delta` and repeatedly pressing Tab allows you to cycle through the level skip commands for the six Delta levels, when you see the one you want, just press Enter to select it.

SPAWNING MONSTERS

➔ If you want to spawn zombies, demons, or even boss enemies, use the command `spawn [name of enemy]` in the console.

BOSS CONSOLE NAMES

Console Command	Enemy
monster_boss_cyberdemon	Cyberdemon
monster_boss_guardian	Guardian
monster_boss_guardian_seeker	Guardian's Seeker
monster_boss_sabaath	Sabaath
monster_boss_vagary	Vagary

DEMON CONSOLE NAMES

Console Command	Enemy
monster_demon_archvie	Archvie
monster_demon_cherub	Cherub
monster_demon_hellknight	Hellknight
monster_demon_imp	Imp
monster_demon_maggot	Maggot
monster_demon_mancubus	Mancubus
monster_demon_pinky	Pinky
monster_demon_revenant	Revenant
monster_demon_tick	Tick
monster_demon_trite	Trite
monster_demon_wraith	Wraith

ZOMBIE CONSOLE NAMES

Console Command	Enemy
monster_zombie_bernie	Flaming zombie
monster_zombie_sawyer	Chain saw zombie
monster_zombie_zsec_machinegun	Z-Sec zombie w/machine gun
monster_zombie_zsec_pistol	Z-Sec zombie w/pistol
monster_zombie_zsec_shield	Z-Sec zombie w/shield
monster_zombie_zsec_shotgun	Z-Sec zombie w/shotgun
monster_zombie_commando	Commando zombie
monster_zombie_commando_cggun	Commando zombie w/chaingun
monster_zombie_fat2	Fat zombie
monster_zombie_fat_wrench	Fat zombie w/wrench
monster_zombie_maint_bald	Generic zombie
monster_zombie_maint_nojaw	Generic zombie
monster_zombie_maint_wrench	Generic zombie w/wrench
monster_zombie_maint_skinny	Generic zombie
monster_zombie_maint	Generic zombie
monster_zombie_maint2	Generic zombie
monster_zombie_maint_flashlight	Generic zombie w/flashlight
monster_zombie_suit_neckstump	Generic headless zombie
monster_zombie_suit_bloodymouth	Generic zombie
monster_zombie_suit_skinny	Generic zombie
monster_zombie_labcoat	Generic zombie
monster_zombie_limb	Generic zombie w/severed limb
monster_zombie_skinny	Generic zombie
monster_zombie_pipe	Generic zombie
monster_zombie_tshirt_bald	Generic zombie
monster_zombie_tshirt_blown	Generic zombie
monster_zombie_jumpsuit	Generic zombie
monster_zombie_jumpsuit_eating	Generic zombie

SCREENSHOTS



The command `screenshot [x] [y]`, where *x* and *y* are numeric values in a 4:3 ratio, takes a screenshot at that resolution, no matter what resolution you're currently playing the game at.

For instance, if you don't want to type `screenshot 4000 3000` at the console, if you're playing at 800x600, typing `screenshot 4000 3000` at the console takes a screenshot of the current view at 4000x3000 pixels. The maximum resolution is limited only by the quality of your videocard. Some common screenshot sizes are:

- 640x480
- 800x600
- 1024x768
- 1280x960
- 1600x1200
- 2400x1800
- 4000x3000

Screenshots are automatically saved to the screenshots folder in your Doom 3 installation folder.

BINDING KEYS



To manually configure your control scheme and assign a key to a specific console command, use the following command at the console: `bind [key] [command]`.

For example, if you don't want to type `screenshot 1280 960` every time you want to take a 1280x960 screenshot, you could use the command `bind m screenshot 1280 960`. After entering that command, you can take a 1280x960 screenshot at any time simply by pressing *M*.

DEF FILES

NOTE: Modifying def files is for advanced users only. Read this entire section before attempting def file modification. Never modify your def files without first making a copy of the originals!



All of the attributes for every weapon and enemy in the game are stored in definition or "def" files. Find these files in `doom/base/def`. You can open these files in any text-editing program (such as Microsoft Word) and change specific values in the def files to create wildly different effects in Doom 3.

For example, if you were to change the "damage" value in the `weapon_machinegun` def file from 9 to 900, a single shot from your machine gun would kill just about any enemy in the game!

However, there are two **very important warnings**:

1. Excessive def file modification, especially if you don't really know what you're doing, can lead to instability and crashes in the game and may make Doom 3 unplayable.
2. If you alter your def files in any way, you cannot join multiplayer games. You can host them, however, and the modifications will apply to every player in the game, not just you.

Because modifying def files can have unpredictable and sometimes undesirable responses, **always make a copy of the original def folder** before modifying its contents. That way, returning the def files to their original state is as simple as replacing the modified folder with the original. If you don't have a copy of the original def folder, you'll have to uninstall Doom 3 and reinstall it from scratch to replace the folder; this will also erase all progress you've made in the game. 🚫

NOTE: Neither GMR, Prima Games, nor Id Software takes responsibility for any undesirable effects should you decide to modify the Doom 3 def files. You do so completely at your own risk, with full knowledge that doing so might render Doom 3 unplayable!





A.I.

HIS CODES ARE REAL. BUT HE IS NOT



>>>BOOTUP PROGRAM INITIATED

>>>PRIMA DIRECTIVE #1>>>Serve the public tricks.

>>>PRIMA DIRECTIVE #2>>>Uphold the law that all 3D adventurers cannot jump over crates higher than their knees.

>>>PRIMA DIRECTIVE #3>>>Protect the innocent from developer interview Easter eggs.

>>>PRIMA DIRECTIVE #4>>>[[CLASSIFIED]]

REBOOTING...

>>>PRIMA DIRECTIVE #5>>>Connect to Prima mother brain and begin code download.

>>>ONLINE

01 SPODER-MAN 2 PS2/XB

>>> A.I. Bot is attempting to emulate human emotion of "happiness" as first "fan letter" message is downloading. >>>Scanning content... Begin:

>>>"A.I. Bot sucks! He's the LAMEST [ERROR IN VERBIAGE] I've EVAR read. Get RIDD of this [ERROR IN VERBIAGE] and print MORE CODES, YOU [ERROR IN VERBIAGE]."

>>>ABORT MISSIVE.

>>>Response: A.I. Bot regrets to inform fleshbag that assimilation of codes pages has been completed and remainder of magazine is only a matter of time. A.I. Bot concludes fleshbag computer keyboard malfunction. Suggests Caps Lock receive overdue maintenance. Finally, A.I. Bot already dispatched Hunter-Killer unit to your geographical location to terminate with extreme prejudice. Many thanks for kind words. >>>Spider-Man 2 codes begin....

For this code to work, you must not have any Spider-Man 2 saves on your memory card or your Xbox. Start a new game and enter the name **HCRAYERT**. This will give you 200,000 hero points, swing and web zip upgrades, big game hunter, alien buster, and shock absorber. It won't let you keep this name, but every time you enter it, it's another 200,000 hero points for you.



02 PSI-OPS: THE MINOGATE CONSPIRACY PS2/XB

>>> A.I. Bot linking to Charlatan.parlorgame.mindflummox.ini file. Uploading...complete. A.I. Bot is now a fully qualified psychic.

A.I. Bot understands you have a fleshbag of ancestral origin with the letters "f," "a," "k," or "e" in their model number, who succumbed to inevitable fleshbag inferiority: death. Dead fleshbag currently "passed over" and says "death in no way results in a crushing empty void of nothingness."

A.I. Bot now senses your relief.

A.I. Bot requests 300 Earth dollars (U.S.) for "amazing powers." Immediately.

To enter these codes, highlight Extra Content and press the R trigger (Xbox) or R1 (PS2).

Super psi powers	456456
All powers from the start	537893
Bulletproof	548975
Unlimited ammo	978945
No head	987978



03 SAMURAI WARRIORS PS2/XB

>>> A.I. Bot was once stalked by Samurai Droid KA-89 sent by overseer-class editor "Byron." The KA-89 is the latest in artificial contract killing, featuring a cyber katana, self-flagellation dishonor subroutine, and cherry-blossom expulsion ducts. A.I. Bot was fortuitous to have hired the Samurai Droid KA-90, with cyber katana upgraded to demonic blue-flamed sword with optional thermonuclear detonator. Combat was honorable but ultimately short-lived.

Unlock these characters by meeting these requirements.

Keiji Maeda	Complete Kenshin story.
Nobunaga Oda	Complete Nah, Ochi, and Magoichi stories.

Geomon Ishikawa	Complete Okuni story.
Okuni	Complete Keji story.
Kunoichi	Complete Shingen and Hamzo stories.

Magoichi Saika	Complete any story.
Shingen Takeda	Complete Yukimura story.
Masamune Oate	Complete any two stories.
Noh	Complete Ranmaru story.
Ranmaru Mari	Complete Mitsuhide story.



04 MTX: MOTOTRAX PS2/XB

>>> A.I. Bot determined the shortest way to thrust fleshbag endoskeleton part_name "humerus" through part_name "ulna" is to mount odd and obsolete biwheeled perambulator contraption and drive off stack of sand at maximum velocity. A.I. Bot urges landing on elbow only.

Enter these codes at the Cheat menu screen.

Race as a Slipknot rider	86657457
Slipknot movie	23F7NC5



05 CATWOMAN PS2/GB

- ➔ A.I. Bot urges all fleshbags to ignore Spider-Man 2 movie and instead enter the nearest conglomerate cineplex and view Catwoman immediately. WARNING! A.I. Bot virus detector alert!
Virus.alt.GigI.exe has been initialized. Please ignore earlier statement.

Highlight the Comic option in the Main menu and go to Vault. Enter the password 1940. This will open up additional items in the Comic option.



06 WAY OF THE SAMURAI 2 PS2

- ➔ A.I. Bot is a loner. A.I. Bot voted by only friend "Robbie" as "Robot most likely to short-circuit and commit thermonuclear meltdown." If A.I. Bot is cut, does he not bleed?

Negative. A.I. Bot does not bleed, thanks to titanium shell impervious to slashing implements.

In the Character Customization screen, highlight Name Selection and enter this code.

Choose any character model
L1, R2, R1, L2, L1, R2, R1, L2, Square
While still on the Name Options screen, press Left or Right to cycle through the different skins.



07 NCAA FOOTBALL 2005 GC

- ➔ A.I. Bot downloading definition of "football." Excerpts follow: The carrying of inflated pig's bladder by narcotic-enhanced Neanderthal-hybrid subbreeds...appears to be part of primitive ritual involving the overimbibing of fermented barley products on the part of the spectators...also see "the wearing of shoulder pads." Conclusion: Most troubling.

At the Pennant Collection screen, press Z + A and enter any of the following codes.

Crossed the Line pennant
Cuffed pennant
Stuffed pennant
Take Your Time pennant
Thread the Needle pennant

Tiburon
EA Sports
NCAA
Football
2005



08 MEGA MAN ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION GC

- ➔ A.I. Bot once attempted to create his own robot boy with appendage-based combat capabilities. After extensive research involving the assimilation of fleshbag and inorganic materials, A.I. Bot discovered that Test_Subject008 Billy_G_Foster from Vancouver, British Columbia, is unable to withstand Version003 Plasma Reactor insertion and forced neural implants without expiring. A.I. Bot engaging "annoyance" emotion subroutine as a result of cheap, foreign Canadian parts.

Mega Man 2: All energy tanks
Mega Man 2: All weapons, items, and four energy tanks
Mega Man 3: All weapons, items, nine energy tanks, and no Dr. Wily robots
Mega Man 4: All weapons and items
Mega Man 5: All weapons and items
Mega Man 6: All weapons and items
Mega Man 7: RUSH, super rocket arm, 999 bolts, four birds, four energy and weapon tanks, SP tank, energy bolt, exit, all weapons, shield, robot screw, all bosses dead

A5 B1 B3 C4 D2 D3 E1 E4 E5

A5 B2 B4 C1 C3 C5 D4 D5 E2

Blue: A3 B5 D3 F4 Red: A6

A1 A4 B5 E2 F1 F3

Blue: B4 D6 F1 Red: C1 D4 F6

B6 D4 F2 F4 F6

7853 5842 2245 7515

Defeat the first three bosses in Mega Man 1.

G4TV interview/retrospective

Complete Mega Man 8.

Homage to Mega Man song

Complete Mega Man 2.

Mega Man 2: The Power Fighters

Complete Mega Man 7.

Mega Man Drum and Bass song

Defeat the first three bosses in Mega

Man 8.



09 TEKKEN ADVANCE GBA

- ➔ A.I. Bot continues to deride fleshbags' determination to engage in colloquially outdated sport of "fisticuffs." Suggests Gauss Cannon replacement and plasma shielding would ensure victory. A.I. Bot employed both enhancements in World Robot Extreme Destruction Challenge of 2459 against overly lubed C-3PO and emerged victorious, if slightly oily.

This code can be entered at the Title screen.

All fighters

Hold A and B and press L, R, R, L, L, Up, Up, R.



10 SPYRO ORANGE: THE CORTX CONSPIRACY GBA

- ➔ A.I. Bot has already analyzed all available fleshbag conspiracies. Please refer to the Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy codes from last month.

At the Game Mode Select screen, press the L and R buttons at the same time, then enter any of the codes.

100 gems
Gray mode
200 gems
Hidden card
Spyro's flames become
flying sheep
Enemies turn into sheep
Spyro turns orange

V1510NS
G3MZ
T4P10C4
V4N1LL4

B4150KV
SH33P
SPYRO



CONNECT

THE INTERNET CAN'T SAVE YOU NOW!

ONLINE GAMING

AIN'T NO JOKE

➔ It may seem sort of wussy to sit back and cower in awe of how tough the new Hurricane Pack is, but anyone who's played *Ninja Gaiden* will know we're serious.

The simple act of making your way to the first boss is a good example. In the regular mode, a ninja dressed in white was usually peppered in among the basic, drab gray-clad flunkies who were no pushovers themselves. The white ninjas were the extra tough ones to watch out for. In the Hurricane Pack, the white ninjas now replace the basic foot soldier, which should give you an idea of what you're in for.

To get a sense of perspective, we went back to the normal mode after catching dozens of beatings in Master Ninja mode, and found the original game we once thought to be terribly difficult was suddenly amicable and cooperative.

Still, the Hurricane Pack is one of the most generous and substantial downloads we've ever seen, and it's definitely worth your time. **LE**

NINJA GAIDEN HURRICANE PACK

GET YOUR ASS KICKED HARDER. THIS TIME WITH FEELING

NEWS

➔ Approximately 10 years ago (or maybe it was earlier), Honda Motorcycles ran a TV commercial for its Hurricane brand of racing bikes. The tag line, "Even the ninja must hide...from the Hurricane," was, in essence, a direct challenge to Kawasaki's dominating brand of speed racers, the Ninja. Well, Tecmo has brought its own hurricane—the Hurricane Pack, a wicked, new, feature-rich download for *Ninja Gaiden*.

The game, which was already tough stuff to begin with, has been cranked up so far on the difficulty scale for the second chapter of the *Master Ninja Tournament* that the original modes now seem like ice cream in the park. You may ask "Who the hell wants that kind of punishment?" Well, gamers who want to push their skills to the limit and achieve the No. 1 ranking in the *MNT*, that's who. But gamers who would rather make their way through the new download at their own pace will still find plenty to enjoy.

In a nod to user feedback howling for a full 3D camera, Team Ninja has responded with a fully adjustable camera mapped to the right analog stick. Team Ninja boss Tomonobu Itagaki told us, "Now there is no excuse to fail at *Ninja Gaiden*, since you can no longer blame it on the camera." Other sweet bonuses include the *Dragon Muscle Suit*, made from the muscle fibers of the ancient dragon, as well as the addition of a completely new weapon: a bo staff called the *Lunar*. The staff is said to hold the power of the moon, and it can be upgraded three times. New enemies, such as new *Isline* baddies (known simply as "cats") and the silver-suited *Super MSATs* (Mechanized Special Attack Team), give the game a whole new look and a distinct new challenge. In all, the Hurricane Pack is a very intimidating yet value-packed download. Only the fiercest competitors will survive this new trial, and only the ultimate player will win. Is that player you? **LE** **James Mielke**



➔ Part Spider-Man, part Power Ranger from hell, Ryu's new *Dragon Muscle Suit* (above) is a cool new bonus to *Ninja Gaiden*'s feature list that makes playing through the game fun all over again (in comparison with the new bo staff, of course). If you want to kick a side-school, for older-school, you can use Ryu's outfit from the *Dead or Alive* series (below).



MORE

tips, codes, strategies, online, and more!

 MORE



→ Ryu's new bo staff, the Lunar, is an awesome addition to the game that's available for use in the new Master Ninja Tournament download. Like all of his other weapons, the Lunar comes with its own deep moves list and is absolutely thrilling to watch in action. Its power-up attack is literally a mini-hurricane chewing up all enemies in its path. In fact, Ryu's staff-based attacks are so wicked that he makes Kikaku from Soul Calibur look like an amateur ping-pong champion. But don't take our word for it. Download the Hurricane Pack (free!) now and head for the room just before the chamber with the big trap door in it. You'll obtain the Lunar right there. The trick is surviving long enough to use it. We got our butts kicked in



MASTER NINJA TOURNAMENT

MY LIFE IN VANA'DIEL

A MONTHLY TRAVELOGUE OF ONE EDITOR'S TIME IN FINAL FANTASY XI

MILKMAN



RED MAGE/BARD

MAIN JOB LEVEL: 62
SUBJOB LEVEL: 31
NATION: WINDURST
RACE: HUME
SERVER: SIREN
LINKED: ROUNDABOUTS



The date was July 31, 2004. The event took place at 2 p.m. at a secret cliffside location in East Sarutabaruta (in Windurst), inaccessible by normal means and free from prying eyes. The persons in attendance were there by discreet invite only. In Windurst time it was early evening, the stars were out, a cool breeze was whistling through the trees, and the sound of the crashing waves below barely reached our ears. The occasion: the long-awaited wedding of Wraeth and the Milkman.

Milkman says, "The day I met Wraeth I was running through Port Windurst going God knows where. She poked me as I ran past, so I stopped to talk to her and she was very sweet. Over the next few days she would send me a tell to see what I was up to, and I just so happened to be looking for my keys to Kazham. She helped me that day and every day thereafter. We've been inseparable since. She actually put her own advanced progress on hold so I could catch up to her, so that we could party together. The Roundabouts have grown tremendously since Lyonheart and I started the 'shell, and many players have come and gone, but there has always been one constant by my side. That person is Wraeth."

Wraeth says, "There's comfort in knowing that no matter which side of the world he's on and regardless of what he's doing, Milk would abandon it in an instant to tank a pack of throat-jabbing tonberries chasing me across the jungle. He's my ever-present companion and relentless savior."

And so on this day the wedding chimes rang, the Summerfest fireworks blossomed in the night sky, and Suzulolo the Wedding Master uttered the lines: "The stars are out shining; the night is quite clear. We ask that the lovely bride kindly draw near." That was the cue. First, the Milkman walked to the tree by which Suzulolo stood, and Wraeth followed shortly after, accompanied by their chaperone, Greenthumb. The guests had parted to either side, forming a natural aisle for couple. As the ceremony continued, the pair exchanged the ceremonial food items (Windurstian tradition) and consumed them. Rings were then given and placed upon each other's left hand. Eventually, as Suzulolo made the final inquiry, "Are you certain in this undertaking?" Wraeth and Milkman responded simultaneously, "Yes, we are," and were made husband and wife. Thanks to all for a joyous day in an adventure that has only just begun. **14** James Mielke



"I do. Our destinies are bound."

→ The whole month hasn't been about getting hitched, though. Now that Milkman and various Roundabouts have hit the upper regions of the leveling stratosphere, they've been able to take on the majority of the easier prime battles for the summer job (except for Ubersummer Fenrir) and win. Garuda and Ramuh proved challenging, cutting down a couple Roundies in the process, but Titan, Ifrit, and Leviathan went down with little problem. This month also rang in the seasonal quest, Summerfest, in which players could obtain a traditional Japanese summer kimono called a Yukata. The scene to the left shows Gatecrasher and the quest-giving moogles in Bastok surrounded by the throngs, while the lovely Gaurylella models her Lady's Yukata at right.






→ In what may very well be the most celebrated wedding to take place on Siren, even the GMs made appearances to pay their respects to the new couple. The GM to the left, Kotalain, has a special GM-specific suit of intimidating red armor that gives off a cool he-at-shimmer. Above, the newlyweds prepare to reenact a scene from the movie From Here to Eternity on the beaches of Buburimu Peninsula.





COLLECT-O-RAMA

WHEN YOUR MOM SAYS "CLEAN YOUR ROOM," SHOW HER THIS ARTICLE

 Game journalist-turned-developer Mike Mika has such an extraordinary collection of videogames and videogame ephemera that industry folks come to him for reference material. Here in his 15-foot-by-19-foot "gimp room," accessible by a trapdoor in the floor of his bedroom closet, he stores thousands of games and related bric-a-brac. It's already packed to the rafters, but he's unconcerned. "I'm always going to find a way to get more space," he claims.

FAVORITE OBJECT Pong machine: "It's the coolest thing I have because it's so archaic. When you open it up, you see that all they did was go out and buy a Hitachi black-and-white TV and put it inside the machine—and the coins collect in a bread pan."

RARE ITEMS Berenstein Bears for Atari 2600: "I'll never play it, but I have it because no one else does."

Sword Quest Water World for Atari 2600: "It's horrible only because it's really difficult."

Madden '96 gold disc: Yes, the year *Madden* didn't come out. "If you play it, you'll understand why."

Copies of fax exchanges between John Romero and Scott Miller, pre-Id: "Romero thought Miller was a stalker and used every word in the book to tell him to go away. In fact, it was a clandestine attempt by Miller to poach Romero and crew without their employer knowing. Id was formed as a result of these faxes."

BEING AN ADULT RULES Sit-down *Star Wars* arcade machine: "My dream as a kid was to be able to play *Star Wars* all the time. When I moved to California, I met someone who told me I could get it for \$300. I have a couple of friends who I suspect only like me for my *Star Wars* arcade machine."

OLD SCHOOL vs. NEW SCHOOL "I'm more nostalgic about the old-school stuff because it inspired me to do what I do today. I play the classics, but I don't play them as much as new games. I'll take *Halo* over *Space Invaders* or anything like that any day."

"I HAVE A COUPLE OF FRIENDS WHO ONLY LIKE ME FOR MY STAR WARS ARCADE MACHINE."

KOHAN II

KINGS OF WAR II

AWAKEN, IMMORTAL WARLORD!
COMMAND THE ARMIES OF MANKIND AND BATTLE INTO THE HEART OF EVIL.



RECRUIT YOUR ARMY FROM SIX WARRIOR RACES
AND FIVE RIVAL POLITICAL ALLIANCES.



HANDPICK YOUR HEROES, WARRIORS, AND
BEASTS TO DEVELOP THEIR SKILLS, SPELLS, AND
STRATEGIES AS YOU WAGE WAR AGAINST THE
ARMIES OF THE SHADOW.



KOHAN'S REVOLUTIONARY COMMAND SYSTEM
STREAMLINES EMPIRE MANAGEMENT,
TO FOCUS ON CONQUEST.

THE SEQUEL TO THE 2001 STRATEGY GAME OF THE YEAR
PC GAMER, COMPUTER GAMES MAGAZINE, COMPUTER GAMING WORLD



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THE GREATEST FIGHTERS
KNOW THAT STRENGTH LIES IN NUMBERS

MONSTER HUNTER



GET READY TO
TEAM UP FOR ONLINE PLAY



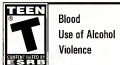
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